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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the 30 issues of volume 2 of learning guides for parents providing suggestions regarding activities to assist their kindergarten and first grade children be successful in school. Each learning guide is organized similarly and contains: (1) a message to parents regarding their role in helping their children succeed; (2) suggested activities using items found at home to build memories and encouraging children to think and imagine; and (3) a read-aloud verse with literacy activities. Activity areas include reading, building a child's confidence, showing how to express emotion, helping a child learn to plan, and communicating openly. (KB)

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Family Connections K-1. AEL Publications No. 1-30.

Patricia Penn and Carla McClure, Editors

AEL, Inc.

2002

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

A Message Just for Parents

Busy parents of young children can do many "little things" that will have a big effect on their child's success in school and in life. The minutes you spend helping your child mix fun and learning are the wisest investments a parent can make.

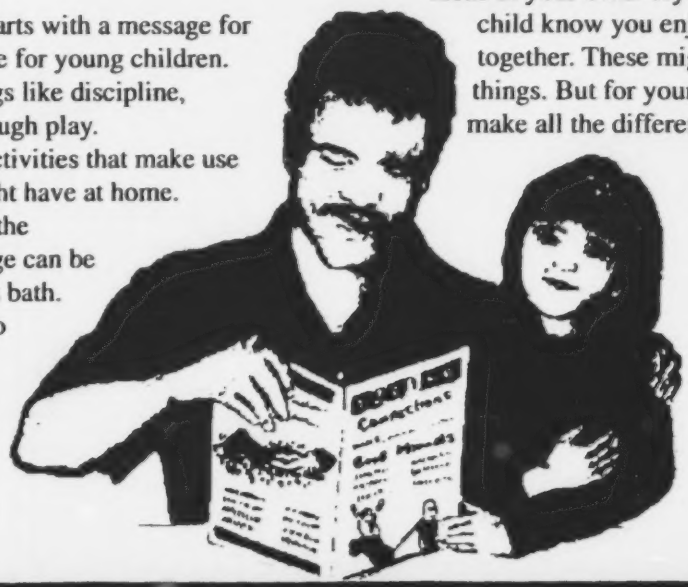
What you are reading right now is the first in a series of learning guides created to help you boost your child's curiosity and confidence. This will help him get off to a good start in school and do better in the coming years. (Note: In these guides, we refer to a child as "him" in some places and "her" in others. We do this to make the text easier to read. Please understand that all activities are suitable for both boys and girls.)

Each learning guide starts with a message for parents and others who care for young children. The messages discuss things like discipline, nutrition, and learning through play.

Inside, you will find activities that make use of everyday items you might have at home. For example, in this guide the activities on the second page can be done as part of your child's bath. These things are not hard to do, but they are very important for your child. They create good memories, cause youngsters to think and imagine, and prepare them for a lifetime of learning.

Reading aloud to your child is another simple thing that can have a big effect on his ability to read. That's why a read-aloud verse is on the back page of every issue. Also included are things to do that add extra learning to the joy of reading. Some parents like to use the read-alouds at bedtime. Do what works best for you and your child.

For more than a decade, parents have used these guides with their children. This new version is richer than ever with things you can do together. Reading the guides will probably give you some ideas of your own. Try them. Let your child know you enjoy your time together. These might seem like little things. But for your child, they can make all the difference.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

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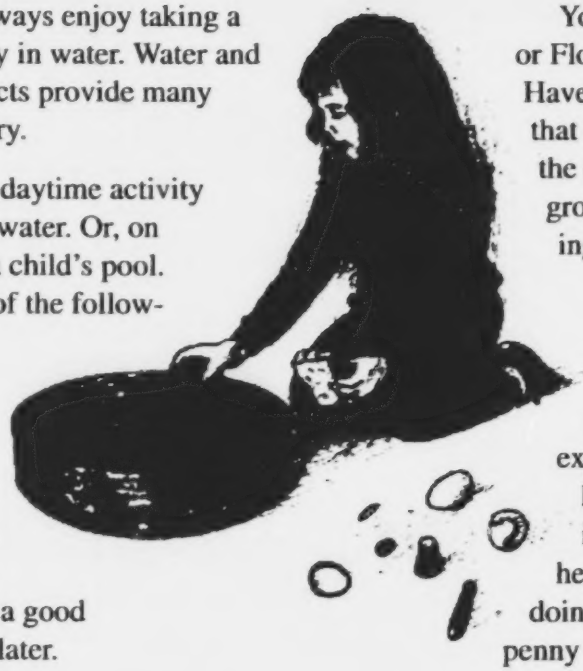
Sink or Float

Children may not always enjoy taking a bath, but they love to play in water. Water and everyday household objects provide many opportunities for discovery.

You can make this a daytime activity by filling a dishpan with water. Or, on warm summer days, fill a child's pool. Then gather up as many of the following as you can find: a paper clip, a penny or other coin, a jar lid, plastic or rubber balls, a cork, a clothespin, an apple, a spoon. You will think of other objects to use. A hard-boiled egg is a good choice. It can be a snack later.



Ask your youngster to guess which items will float. Talk about why he thinks an item will sink or float. This activity is not about getting the right answer. It will help him to raise questions and observe. That's how an interest in science begins.

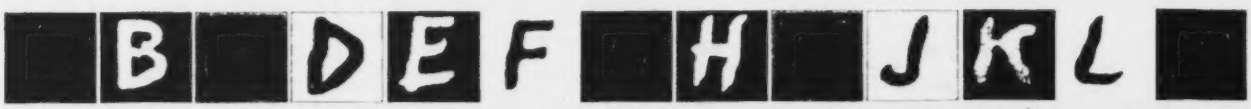
Water play like this can also make taking a bath fun.

Sort and Count

You can also use the Sink or Float activity for math. Have your child put the items that float in one group. Put the ones that sink in another group. Your child is learning to sort.

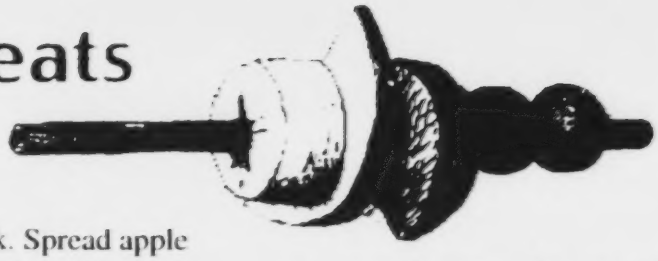
Now have her count each group. If you have found several objects to use in the experiment, she may need help with the counting. It is a good idea to have her talk about what she is doing: "This cork floats. This penny sinks."

Of course she will count aloud. Help her to talk about what she has counted. "Tell me how many things you counted that float." Show your pride when she answers in sentences: "I counted 7 that float and 9 that sink."



Point to each letter as you say the alphabet

Fruit Treats



Fruit is a nutritious snack. Spread apple slices with a little peanut butter to add protein, and you'll have a low-fat snack that is also filling. You will want to slice the apple until your child is able to use a sharp knife. But he can get good practice using small muscles by spreading the peanut butter.

For a special fruit treat, let him make kabobs. Lollipop sticks make good skewers, or you can buy wooden ones. Use fresh fruit when it is available: thick banana slices, seedless grapes, unpeeled apple cubes. Any firm fruit will work.

He will enjoy putting fruit on the skewer in his own personal pattern. Again, talk together as you work. "What will you put on first? Let's name the fruits and their colors."

Library Time

Your public library is worth many thousands of dollars to you. Very few people could afford to buy all the benefits you and your family get free from the library. Books are still the most enjoyed treasure you and your family experience at every visit. There are so many books that your child will love.

Today's library offers other treats, too. Many have audiotapes and videotapes for both adults and children. Most offer Internet access. Libraries also offer special events for children, such as story hours.

Get to know your library. Your child will love having a personal library card. Librarians are there to help, and most are especially delighted to serve children and their parents.

or sing the ABC song to your child.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

My Pesky Puppy

My puppy is a bigger pest
Than fleas, or mice, or flies.
He chews my shoes, and eats Mom's news,
Then through the night he cries.

He digs up Grandpa's flower bed
And keeps me from my chores.
He plays in muddy puddles,
Then walks across clean floors.

But even when he's ornery
I love him every day.
My puppy thinks I'm wonderful
In every single way.

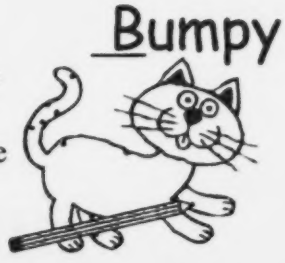
Patricia Penn

Word Check-Up

When you read to your child, you give him a chance to learn new words. Find out which words you might need to explain by asking questions like "What *chores* do you think the puppy might keep the boy from doing?" or "What are some other things a puppy might do if it's *ornery*?" If your child's answer makes you think he doesn't understand the word, give a simple explanation, then ask the question again. Like this: "I was asking about *chores*—the jobs we do around the house. What jobs or chores do you think the puppy might keep the boy from doing?"

Draw a Pet

Get a piece of paper and ask your child to draw an animal she thinks would make a good pet. Tell her it can be a real animal or one she makes up. Ask her what she would name her pet. Write the pet's name beside her drawing. Underline the first letter of the pet's name and say the letter's sound aloud.



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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Yes, Parents Are Teachers

You have probably heard this before: you are your child's first and most important teacher. It's an awesome responsibility, and one that should make you feel proud. But, unless you are a teacher by profession, being told that you are your child's most important teacher might also make you feel uneasy. After all, people go to school for many years to learn to be teachers. How can you be expected to know how to do it?

Don't worry. You probably have in your kitchen something that you can use to help your child learn math, science, art, music, and language. Do you have some potatoes? If you do, you are ready to teach.

You will need something besides the potatoes, of course. You don't have to buy it or take classes to learn it. You already have it: TIME. You may feel you don't have nearly enough time. You are busy, especially if you are a single parent or if you have another job outside your home. But being part of your child's learning doesn't take a great deal of time. Much of it can be combined with things you already do.

For instance, including your youngster in your kitchen activities adds just a little time, and a whole lot of fun. One mother said, "I never thought of potatoes as a learning tool." She found out that her son learned all the time when he worked with her in the kitchen, and had a wonderful time, too. So did she.

So will you and your child. Potatoes are just one example of all the things in your house that you can use to help your child learn. You can probably think of many more. Enjoy these activities together.

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Count Potatoes

One potato, two potatoes,
Three potatoes, four,
Five potatoes, six potatoes,
Seven potatoes, and more.

You probably remember this rhyme from your childhood. Your child will think it's fun to say this rhyme as you actually count potatoes.

First, read the rhyme aloud to your youngster. (The kitchen table is a good place for reading aloud. Don't forget to have the child sit on your left side, so you can let him see you read from left to right.) Then, read the rhyme together.

Now, put several potatoes on the table and let him pick them up as you say the potato verse together. When children handle objects as they count, they begin to put the number words together with the idea of quantity. Don't make this into work. It's math-learning the fun way.

Cook Potatoes

Together, you and your child can decide how you want to prepare the potatoes. Of course you may not be cooking all of them. You can talk about how many you need, and do some more counting. "One for your big brother. One for me. One for you and your little sister to share. How many is that? Let's count. . ."

Suppose you then decide to have french fries. When you cut the potatoes into pieces, you can let your child practice counting. You could also point out that one potato can become a large number when it is cut into many pieces.

As the potatoes cook, encourage your child to think about what is happening to them. They are changing from hard to soft. They are turning a different color. She may ask questions you can't answer. Don't worry. Tell her you can find answers together. A trip to the library could result. There you might find a book or look on the Internet for answers.

The most important thing you can do here is encourage her curiosity. The more questions children ask, the better—even if you don't know all the answers. That is how science begins.

Teach your child the names of these shapes. The rectangles are red; circles are blue.

Turn Potatoes into Art

Your child can make a wonderful painting using potato slices instead of a brush. Just wash a potato and cut it into slices crosswise. You don't even have to peel it first. If you supervise closely and use a knife that's not too sharp, your child can do the cutting.

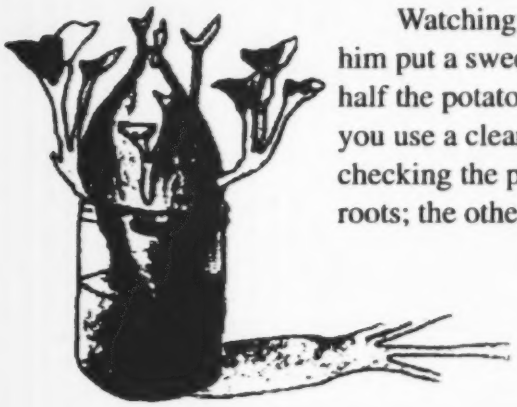
Then let her dip a slice into finger paint and lay it on a sheet of white or colored construction paper. She can use slices that are different shapes, sizes, and colors to form her own patterns. Just throw away the potato slices when she's finished.

You can buy finger paints or make your own. Pour bottled liquid starch into small jars. Baby food jars are fine. Put a few drops of food color into each jar.

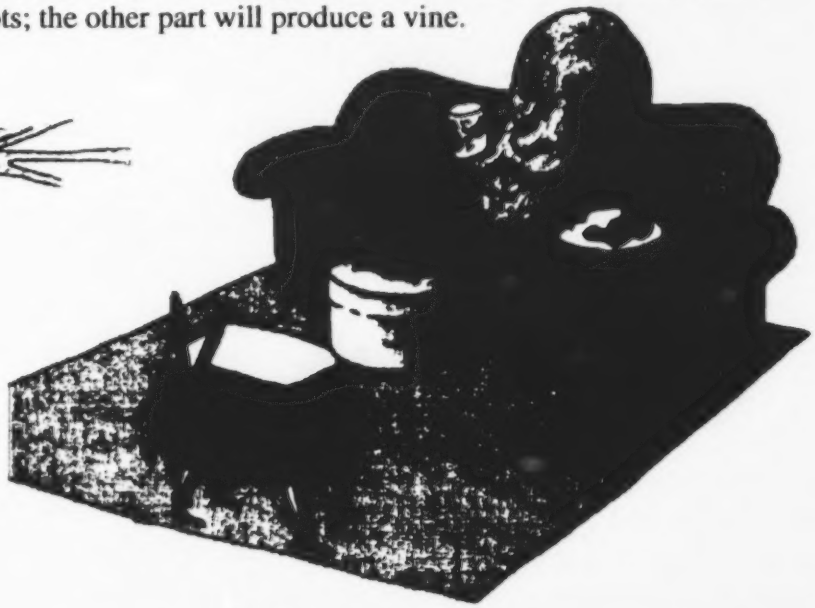
Let your child mix with her finger to get the desired color. Start with red, blue, and yellow. She will discover combinations: red and yellow for orange; blue and yellow for green; all three colors for brown.

Help her print her name on her finished painting. Display it for family and friends.

Grow a Potato



Watching a sweet potato grow is exciting to a child. Have him put a sweet potato in a jar with enough water to cover about half the potato. Set it in a place where it will get plenty of light. If you use a clear or see-through container, your child can enjoy checking the potato's progress. The part under water will grow roots; the other part will produce a vine.



One kind of potato you don't want in your house is a "couch potato." They just plant themselves and get fat. Be sure you and your child get some exercise everyday. Limit the time that you let your child watch television.

The triangles are yellow, and squares are green.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

One Potato or Two?

When Polly Potato met Yerkimer Yam,
They both said *How do you do?*
Then Polly said proudly,
I'm a potato. Who, may I ask, are you?
Well, said Yerkimer, *What a coincidence!*
I'm a potato, too.

Polly responded, with some confusion,
If you're a potato,
Why don't you look like me?

Now it's true that Yerky was orange,
And long, instead of round.
But he was still a potato,
And Polly and Yerky found,
That potatoes, just like people,
As different as they might be,
Can get along with each other,
Taterifically.

Patricia Penn

Tell Me What You Think

Ask, "What things are the same about Polly and Yerky?" Then ask, "What things are different?" You could also ask, "What do you think Yerky and Polly thought about each other?"

Name That Vegetable!

Tell your child: There is something funny about Polly Potato's name—her first and last name both begin with a "p" sound: "Polly Potato." Polly is very excited because soon there will be a new baby in her family. Her mommy and daddy want to give the baby a name that also starts with the "p" sound. Let's think up some names for the baby. For example: Pam Potato if it's a girl, or Pablo Potato if it's a boy. (Together, you could also think up "same-sound" names for other vegetables: Casper Carrot, Tanisha Tomato, Barney Beans.)

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Read, Read, Read

Of all the things you can do to help your child be successful in school, reading to him might be the most important. Reading children's books and stories to him can also be one of the most enjoyable things you do together. While sitting beside you, on your left side so he can see how the words go from left to right, top to bottom, he can feel your warmth and closeness. Point to the words as you read. Let him help turn the pages. Pause to answer his questions. Call attention to rhymes and words that begin with the same sound. Ask him to retell simple stories after you read them.

It is also very important to let him see you reading in the home. Read aloud from things that catch your interest: newspaper articles, letters, magazines, the back of a cereal box.

Help him participate in all the reading and writing you do at home. Let him add something to your grocery list. If he isn't printing yet, he can tell you what to write. Let him watch as you add to the list. When you look up a telephone number, show him what you are doing. These things help him see how we need written language all the time.

Let him choose books at the library. His reasons for selecting certain books can give you lots to talk about together. Appealing pictures can inspire him to make up a new story, or to add to the story in the book.

Buy books for him as often as you can. Books of his own, that he can read again and again, become real treasures. If he sees that you think books are special gifts, he will value them, too.

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Books to Enjoy Together

Here are some books that kindergarten teachers recommend for youngsters in your child's age group. Your local librarian can suggest many others. Ask the librarian to recommend different kinds of books: alphabet books, rhyming books, predictable books that repeat certain words or patterns, or chapter books for your child's age and grade level.

Bringing the Ram to Kapiti Plain	Verna Aardema
The Paper Crane	Molly Bang
The Man Who Could Call Down Owls	Eve Bunting
Growing Vegetable Soup	Lois Elhert
Ask Mister Bear	Marjorie Flack
I Can Add Upside Down	Linda Hayward
Chickens Aren't the Only Ones	Ruth Heller
Look! I Can Read!	Susan Hood
Dear Mr. Blueberry	Simon James
Harold and the Purple Crayon	Crockett Johnson
Leo the Late Bloomer	Robert Kraus
David's Father	Robert Munsch
Nina, Nina, and the Copycat Ballerina	James O'Connor
Viking Ships at Sunrise	Mary Pope Osborne
Potluck	Anne Shelby
Timothy Goes to School	Rosemary Wells
The Three Pigs	David Wisener

A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Veggie-Dip Snack

Raw vegetables make great snacks. They taste good. They are healthful. They are good for your child's teeth.

You probably give your family carrot and celery sticks often. Have you tried these other vegetables raw? Cauliflower pieces, broccoli flowerets, cucumber slices, green pepper rings, turnip slices, zucchini sticks—all are tasty.

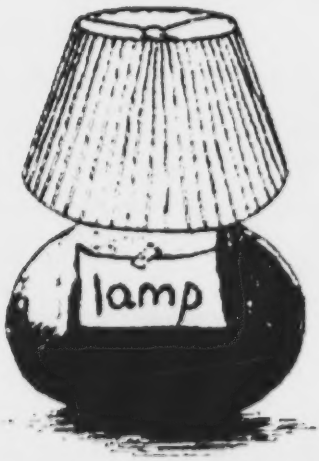
Offer them to your child one or two at a time. You can encourage taste tests by offering a dip with the vegetables. Let your youngster mix the dip. Use one cup plain low-fat yogurt, 2 tablespoons orange juice concentrate, and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon.

Enjoy the snack together as you talk about what happened at school today.

Put a Name on It

As your child is starting to read, it helps to have labels on things all around the house. Together, make signs: table, chair, lamp, couch, door—you can do dozens. As you print the labels, use lowercase letters and name the letters aloud to your child: "l, a, m, p—that spells lamp."

You can tape the signs to solid objects. Pin them on upholstered chairs. Spell out and say the words as you work together to put up the signs. Make more signs as your young student learns to read the first ones. If you have some old magazines or catalogs, cutting out pictures to put on the signs is fun.



Ask your child, "How many candles are lit? How many blue ones are lit? Green? Red?

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Blue Tuesdays for Belinda

On Mondays, Belinda was yellow.
On Tuesdays, she was **blue**.
For breakfast she ate sky muffins;
For lunch she had blueberry stew.

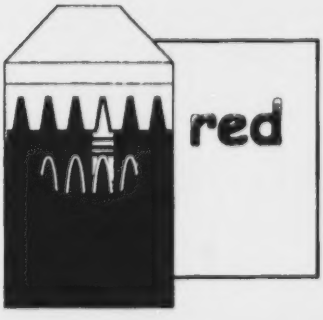
She used the same **blue** crayon
To color the sky and the trees.
When the teacher offered **green** crayons,
Belinda said, "No, thank you, please."

On Wednesdays, Belinda was orange.
On Thursdays, she wanted **greens**.
But on Tuesdays she ate **blue** Jell-O,
And put on her favorite jeans.

Carla Thomas McClure

Read Me a Color

Have your child sit beside you, to your left. Say, "Whenever I pause, it's your turn to read the color word." Read the poem again. Point to each word as you read it. When you come to a color word, wait for your child to say the color. You might need to offer a clue: "What color is the word I'm pointing to?"



Play with the Days

Ask your child, "What foods would Belinda eat on Mondays?" Point to the word "yellow" to give a clue. See how many yellow foods he can name (for example, lemon pie). Do the same for the other days of the week. Make a game of it by taking turns naming foods. You could also get a box of crayons, then ask your child to pick a color for Belinda to use on Fridays. Use the crayon to write the color word anywhere on this page. (For example, if he chooses a red crayon, use it to write the word "red.")

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

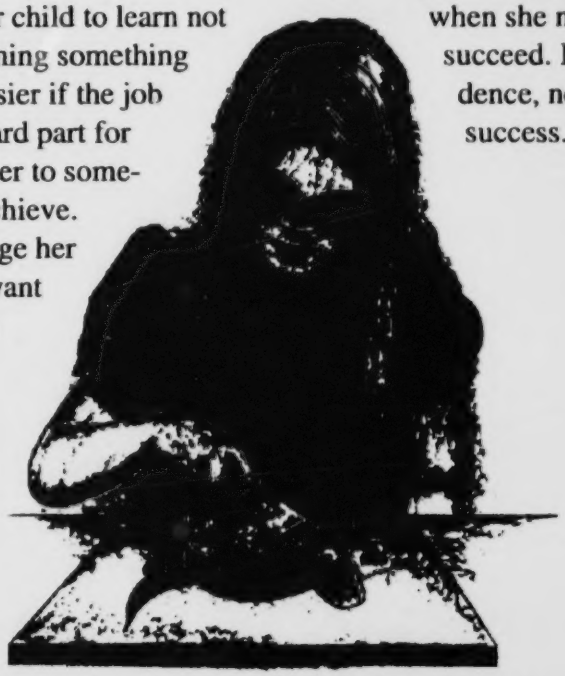
Success Encourages Your Child

From early on, children try to master their world. They are eager to be able to do things well. They need to succeed, and on their own terms. They may need help with a new task, but parents must be careful not to help too soon. Sometimes all you need to do is show your child you are interested and available.

It is important for your child to learn not to give up when she is learning something new. Sticking to a job is easier if the job is within her ability. The hard part for you as a parent is to steer her to something that she is ready to achieve. You don't want to discourage her from a challenge. You do want to help her avoid too much frustration.

For example, she might try to do a puzzle that has too many pieces for her ability level. Help her finish it with encouraging words. "This one is a little hard to do. With practice, you will be able to do it all by yourself." Such remarks as "I told you this was too hard for you" cause her to doubt herself.

Praise her in a specific way when she finishes a job: Knowing that you are there when she needs you helps her succeed. In building self-confidence, nothing succeeds like success.



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Look Carefully

One of the most important skills in science is being a good observer. Be alert to ways you can help your child learn to observe. One easy way is to do something to your appearance. For instance, if you wear earrings, put on two different ones. If your child doesn't say anything about the odd pair, ask her if she notices anything unusual.

Other ways to help her practice seeing:

- Put your shirt on wrong side out.
- Wear socks of two different colors.
- Comb your hair a new way.

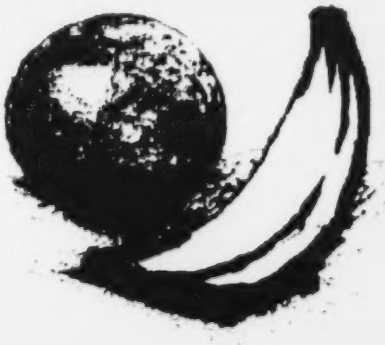
Ask her to do something unusual to her own appearance to see whether you will notice.

Try Touching

You can help your child develop his sense of touch. Your house is full of objects that feel very different to the touch. Start in the kitchen with vegetables or fruit. Have your child touch several fruits and tell you how they feel. He may say that bananas feel smooth. Oranges feel slightly bumpy. He would use other words to describe both fruits if you peel them for him to eat.

He might use "smooth" and "bumpy" to tell you how onions and potatoes feel, too. Encourage him to use a variety of words to describe things: fuzzy, scratchy, rough, slick, soft. You will think of many others as you work together. Talk with him about how some things feel alike and others feel different.

Help him discover how he can use his sense of touch to guess what something is without seeing it. Put a familiar object in a pillowcase and close the top. Have him try to tell what it is by feeling its shape. Put more than one item in and let him see how many he can identify.



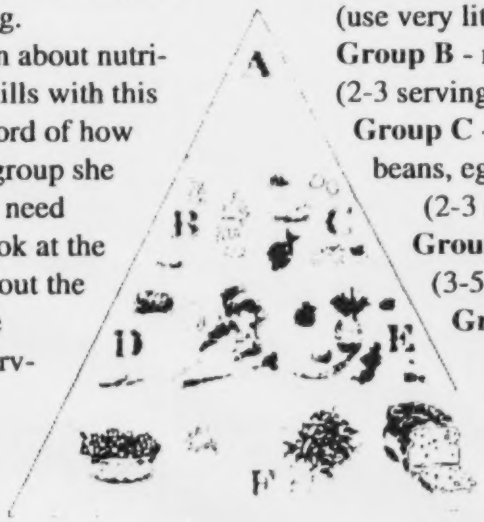
Have your child count the fish in each aquarium.

Count for Nutrition

This pyramid (another new word for your child's rapidly growing vocabulary) is a way of picturing the food groups that make up healthful nutrition. Plan your family's meals to include the number of servings that experts recommend for healthy eating.

Your youngster can learn about nutrition and practice her math skills with this activity. Have her keep a record of how many servings in each food group she eats for a few days. She may need some help with the chart. Look at the pyramid together and talk about the different food groups and the recommended numbers of servings.

On the chart, show her how to put a tally mark (another new word!) for each serving. At the end of the day, let her count the tally marks for you and write the number next to the marks.



Group A - fats, oils, & sweets (use very little)
Group B - milk, yogurt, & cheese (2-3 servings)
Group C - meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, & nuts (2-3 servings)
Group D - vegetables (3-5 servings)
Group E - fruits (2-4 servings)
Group F - bread, cereal, rice, & pasta (3-5 servings)

See the example in the shaded area before filling in the chart.

Food Group	Recommended Daily Number of Servings	Number of Servings I Had				
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
F	3-5	// 2	//// 4	/// 3	~~HH~~ 5	/// 3
A	use very little					
B	2-3					
C	2-3					
D	3-5					
E	2-4					
F	3-5					

Ask, "How many fish are there in both aquariums?"

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Some Curious Things about Crickets

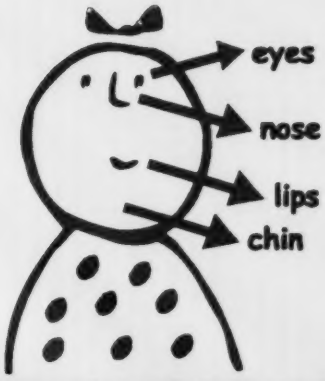
Guess how a cricket makes his song?
Why, he rubs his wings together.
Sometimes he sings the whole night long,
Especially in warm weather!

Guess where a cricket has his ears?
Why, on his knees, of all places.
And when he touches where he hears,
He brings big smiles to our faces!

Ron Diss

A Game of Touch

Say, "Let's play touch. Whenever I name a body part, touch that part of your body." One at a time, name several parts for him to touch (lips, cheeks, forehead, knees, elbows, toes). Save the ears for last. Then say, "Show me what you would do if you were a cricket and I told you to touch your ears." If your child does not reach for his knees, cover the picture and remind him: "Where did the poem say crickets have their ears?"



Pictures and Words

Tell your child to draw a picture of a person's face. To the right of the picture, print word labels such as *eye, nose, lips,* and *chin.* Let your child watch (or help) as you draw arrows from the picture on the left to the word label on the right.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Build Your Child's Confidence

Should you praise your child? Of course you should. Can you praise your child too much? Yes, you can, say some experts in child development.

Parents hear a lot these days about self-esteem. We have learned that children who feel secure and valued are more apt to do well in school. They are also more likely to get along with others and to be aware of the needs of other people.

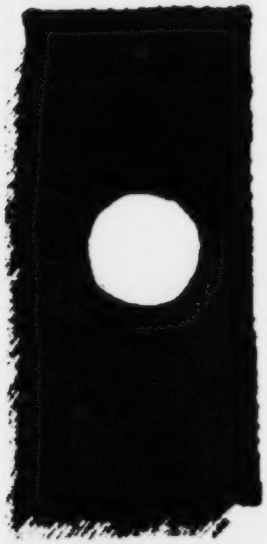
Confidence grows partly out of feeling competent and able. When children learn how to do something, they experience success. It is important to praise your child when this happens, to reinforce her feeling of competence.

Make your praise specific. Instead of "What a good girl you are!" when your daughter eats a new vegetable, say "I like it when you try different foods." When your child does a drawing for you, say something about how pleasing the colors are, or that the car in the drawing looks like it will go really fast.

Children who are praised too much can become too focused on the praise. But if you use it to build their self-confidence, children begin to depend on themselves. Be sure to praise your child, and do it sincerely.

PS 031034

A Safety Snack



Here is a good lesson in safety for your child. When the learning is done, he will enjoy eating the lesson.

Use half of a graham cracker or some other rectangular cracker. Spread the cracker with cream cheese or peanut butter. Use colored candies (M&Ms or spice drops) to make traffic lights: red on top, yellow in the center, green on the bottom.

Explain that the colors stand for words. "Red" means "stop." "Yellow" means "caution" or "be careful." "Green" means "go." Talk about how the traffic lights help people who are walking and people in cars.

If you can make some of these traffic signal crackers and then go for a drive, or a walk, your child will surely remember.

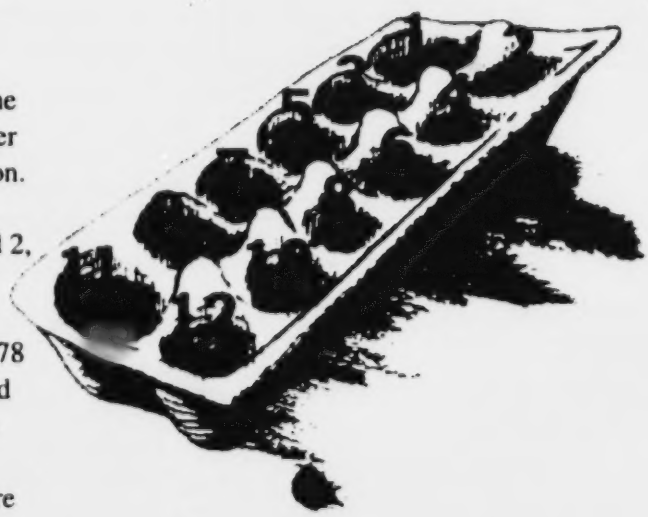
Beans in a Carton

Save your egg cartons. They are great teaching tools. Just one example is bean counting. (Come to think of it, dried beans are also a great teaching tool.)

With a marking pen or crayon, label each section of an egg carton with big numbers from one to 12. Give your child a cup of dried beans. Ask her to count the right number of beans into each section. Count with her if she needs help: one bean in the section marked 1, two beans in the section marked 2, and so on. She may not be able to count every section, and that's fine.

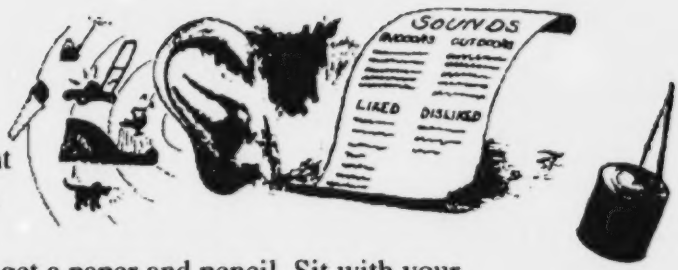
If she finishes, you can tell her that she used 78 beans, and explain why. She will not be able to add the numbers the way you do, but she will begin to understand the idea.

Remember, this is not serious business. You're helping her to learn that math can be fun.



Have your child make the orange pumpkins look happy

Listen, Please



Sounds are all around us. Being able to hear how the sounds are different is important to your child's learning. He needs practice in describing what he hears, too.

Here's a way to practice listening. First, get a paper and pencil. Sit with your child in the kitchen. Close your eyes, and be very quiet. Listen for one minute. Ask your child to tell you all the sounds he heard. Make a list. Add some of the things you heard.

Now do the same thing outdoors. Talk with him about the indoor sounds and the outdoor sounds. How were they alike? How were they different? Did you hear more sounds outdoors or indoors? Which sounds were louder? Softer? Which did he like? Which did he dislike?

Be respectful of his answers. Encourage him to ask you questions, so he can practice paying attention to your answers.

Number Hunt

There is an easy way to make your child more aware of numbers. Go on a "number hunt." First, hunt indoors for numbers. You and your child will find them in many places. Here are just a few: telephone, clock or watch, money, radio, calendar, ruler, thermometer or thermostat, calculator, computer, television or remote control. You will find others.

Each time your child finds numbers, explain how they are used: "Numbers on a themometer tell us the temperature. Numbers on a ruler help us measure things." Point out today's date in the newspaper and page numbers inside books. Show him serial numbers on appliances.

When you go outside, point out the numbers on your house or mailbox. If you go for a drive, look for street signs and traffic signs. Show him the speedometer in your car. If you stop for gas, let him watch the numbers change on the gas pump.

Talk about numbers whenever you see them being used. Show excitement whenever he notices numbers. Encourage him to use them in his drawings.

and the yellow pumkins look sad.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Animal Sounds

Have you ever been inside of a zoo,
Where lions and monkeys reside?
Have you ever heard the sounds that abound
From animals, side by side?

Did you hear the camel that hissed and spit,
Or the bears that grumbled and growled?
And the bark of seals and the chatter of apes
Or the monkeys that howled and howled.

Have you ever jumped at the roaring sound
Of lions and tigers and such?
The elephant's trumpet; the honk of geese—
The noise is really too much!

But go to the place where giraffes are kept
And where snakes slither and slide.
It's quiet and silent, no talking here—
You wouldn't find noise if you tried!

Carol Thigpin

adapted from "The Sounds of the Zoo" by Patricia Penn

Animal Language

Ask your child to supply a "sound track" for this poem. Whenever you read a sound word such as "hiss" or "bark," pause. Let her make the sound. After the last verse, practice being very quiet. You might be surprised at how quiet it is—or amazed at how many noises you hear!

Alphabet Zoo

Get 27 sheets of paper. Write a different letter of the alphabet at the top of each page, like this: Aa, Bb, Cc. Write "My Alphabet Zoo Book" on the remaining sheet of paper, put it on top of the pages, and staple them together to make a booklet. Tell your child that for the next few days, he should tell you every time he sees an animal or hears one mentioned so that you can add it to his alphabet zoo book. Every time he reports an animal, let him watch you write the animal word on the correct page of the booklet. For example, "bear" goes on the Bb page, and "goat" goes on the Gg page. You could start by asking your child to tell you what animals are named in the poem. Let him draw pictures or cut them out of magazines to illustrate the different pages of the book.

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FAMILY Connections

K-1

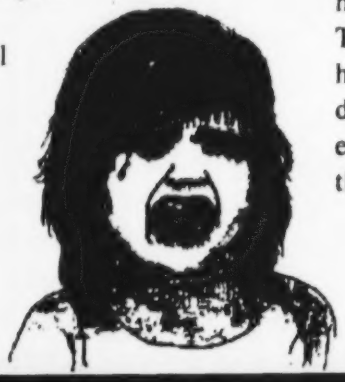
For the family of _____

Show Me How You Feel

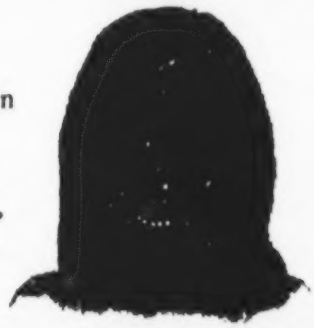
Children need to express their feelings. You can help by letting them know it is all right to show emotion. Yes, even tears are okay. Both boys and girls can cry. Remember too, that sometimes children, like adults, don't want to talk about how they feel.

Words are just one way for children to get feelings out. They can also express emotion by painting or drawing. Give your child plenty of paper and crayons or marking pens. You do not need expensive materials. Wrapping paper and brown bags are fine for young artists.

Drawing pictures can be a child's way of doing something no one else can do in just the same way. A child's drawing can tell you how that child sees himself, his family, and his world. He may want to tell you about the drawing, but shouldn't be made to feel that he has to.



Moving to music is another way of conveying feelings. Suggest that your youngster turn on a radio to the music of his choice or put on a tape or CD. Encourage him to move to the music, or sing along. The choice of music can reflect his feelings.



When children are learning and growing rapidly, we sometimes forget that they are still young. They need guidance to learn how to handle emotions. They need you to help them find different ways to express themselves.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

Teach About Letters

You can use this alphabet chart in many ways. Help your child get ready to write by showing him how letters are made. (The numbers and arrows show you the way schools teach children to do it.) Use the chart to help him recognize the letters and name them. Let him point to a letter, then tell him a word that begins with that letter's sound. Show him the difference between capital and lowercase letters. Teach him how to write his own name. As he learns to make more letters, cheer him on!

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Recipes for Learning

Even before your child learns to read, he can see how important reading is in everyday life. Working with you as you follow a recipe is a useful activity. It is really fun if you are making something he likes a lot—such as cookies.

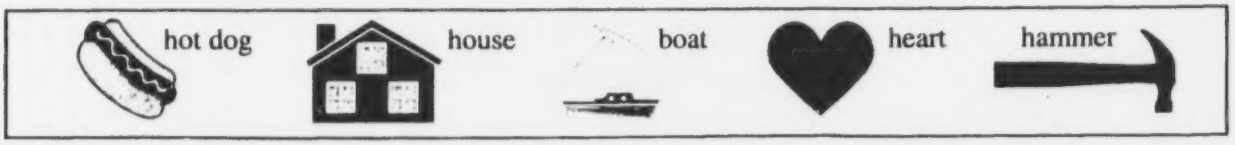
Let him measure for you. He can experience what it means to "Use 2 cups of flour." He gets to learn a little math when the recipe says "Add 4 tablespoons of oil." "Mix in 1 teaspoon of salt."

You can also work in some science. Help him discover how things change when they are mixed together and cooked. It's amazing to a child to be involved in turning a list of words into something good to eat.

Tell Your Own Story

Look at the picture with your child. Ask her to tell you a story about the picture. If she needs help getting started, ask her a question: "What do you think has just happened?" You could ask her to describe some feelings: "Do you think the giraffe is happy about being hugged? Is the hippo happy?" Children like to name things. Suggest that your child name all the characters in her story.

Offer to write the story on paper for her. You could get a notebook to start a collection of her stories if she likes this activity.



Touch and name each picture. Have your child point to the things that start with "h."

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

The Mystery of Shoes

Shoes come in two's
but they're easy to lose.

I have a pair
I can't find anywhere.

They're red like race cars
and fast like track stars.

If I don't find them soon,
I'll be sent to my room.

Look—there they are! Together like twins!
Now, which shoe should my left foot go in?

Carla Thomas McClure

Things That Come in Two's

Ask your child to name some things from the poem that come in pairs or sets of two (shoes, twins). Ask him to help you think of some other things that come in two's. He might mention eyes, hands, feet, gloves, wings, or other things.

◀ ◀ Left-to-Right ▶ ▶

Tell your child that you have decided that today is Left Day. That means the left foot gets its sock and shoe before the right foot does. The two of you get to use your left hand to eat, color, and brush your teeth. If you play a game, you have to use your left hand to roll the dice or deal cards or move your game piece. At the end of Left Day, use your left pointing finger to point at each word as you read the poem. Tell your child that when you read, you start on the left side, even if it's not Left Day.

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FAMILY Connections

K-1

For the family of _____

Children Learn When They Play

Unlike adults, children do not see a difference between work and play. Their play is their work. Play gives them ways to try out new ideas. It lets them express emotions. It allows them to take on many different roles. Play is learning, and it should be joyful.

Children enjoy learning, unless we teach them not to. They want to discover. They are natural and fearless explorers. They are trying to make sense of their world.

Watch your child when she is playing at something that holds her interest. She can pay attention for a long time. But children are not empty boxes waiting for adults to fill them with things we think they should know. Telling isn't teaching. What children need from adults is help in making new discoveries.

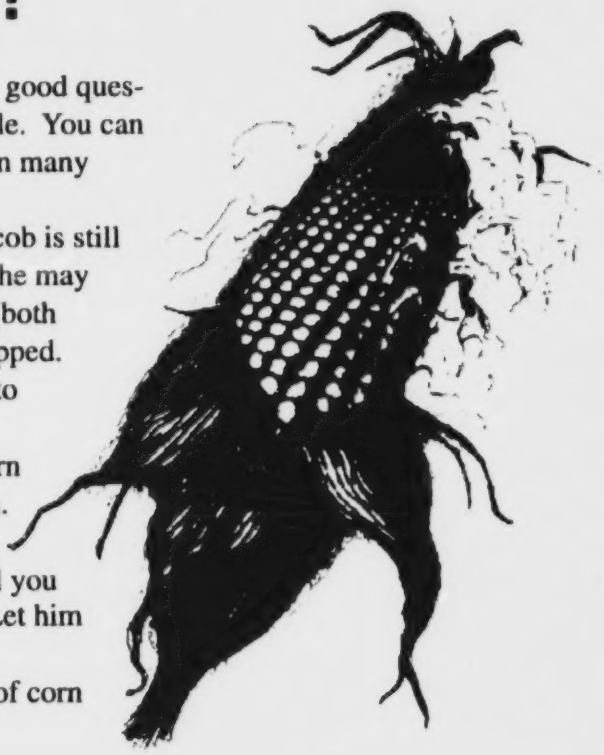
Observe your child and try to understand what she is experiencing. Try to see her from the inside out. Look at the world from her point of view. Accept her as she is, where she is. And, above all, listen to her. She will let you know in many ways what she is eager to learn more about.

Children develop at different rates. Your daughter may not know as many letters as her brother did at her age. But she might understand numbers better than he did. Youngsters just go about learning different things in different ways at different stages in their development.

Play is one of the most important ways they have of learning.

PS 031034

Can Corn Hear You?



If corn has ears, why can't it hear? Now there's a good question for you. Corn is an especially interesting vegetable. You can use corn to show your child that a product can come in many different forms.

For example, fresh from the garden, corn on the cob is still dressed in green, adorned with silk. It's a kind of silk he may not know about. Show him frozen corn, canned corn (both whole and cream-style), dried corn, popped and unpopped.

Look at corn meal, and talk about how it is used to make bread. You could even make some corn bread together. Show him some corn syrup, corn oil, and corn oil margarine. Talk about taco shells as a form of corn. Snack on some corn chips.

Help him develop language skills. Ask him to tell you how the forms of corn are different from each other. Let him guess what you do with corn oil, for example.

Finish this corny conversation by having a bowl of corn flakes together.

Over and Under

Can your child find something in her closet if you tell her it is "over the light switch" or "behind the door"? Spend some time showing her what these comparative words mean.

Use two familiar items, such as a sock and shoe. Ask her to show you how to put the sock: **over** the shoe; **under** the shoe; **in** the shoe; **behind** the shoe; **on** the shoe; **in front of** the shoe; **and beside** the shoe.

Let her give you directions, too.

Ask your child to count the number of train cars.

Largest and Smallest

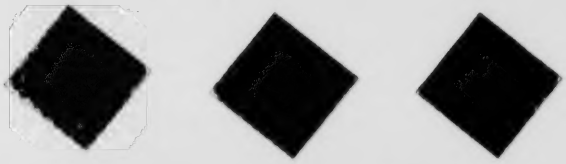
When you are getting ready to make vegetable soup or a tossed salad, use the opportunity to help your youngster learn about comparisons. Ask her to bring you the largest carrot, the smallest onion, the longest carrot, the shortest cucumber.

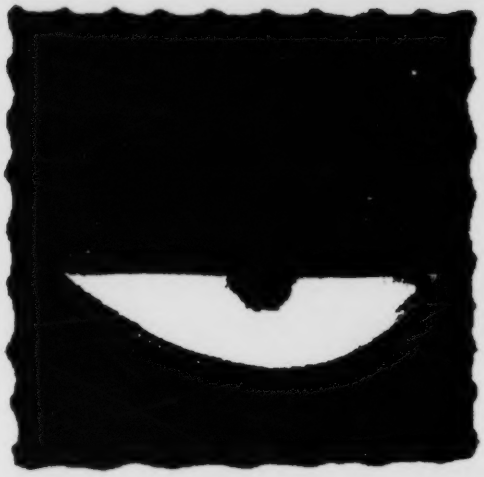
Now have her put all the items in a row from largest to smallest.

You will think of other ways to give her practice in comparisons. There are many in the kitchen. Pots and pans are useful in comparing different sizes. Cans are, too.

Be sure to praise her efforts. Part of becoming competent comes from the approval you give for her work.

Smiling Crackers

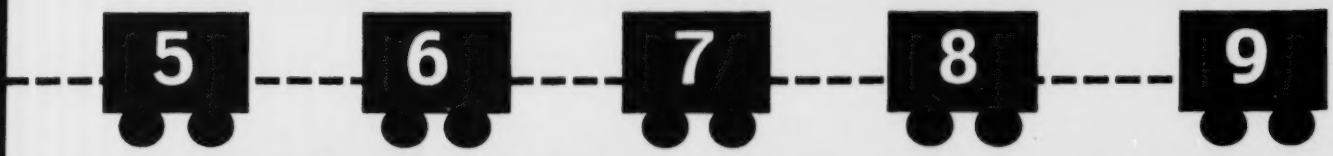




You can combine nutrition and art for a healthy snack. Your child will enjoy both preparing and eating his creation. He might like to make Smiling Crackers for other family members, too.

Spread cream cheese or peanut butter on a graham or other cracker. He can do the spreading with a small knife that is not sharp. Then let him make a face on each cracker. Use raisins for eyes and noses.

Thin apple wedges make smiling mouths. If you use unpeeled red apples, the skin adds color to the faces.



How many are blue? green? red?

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

An Apple Surprise

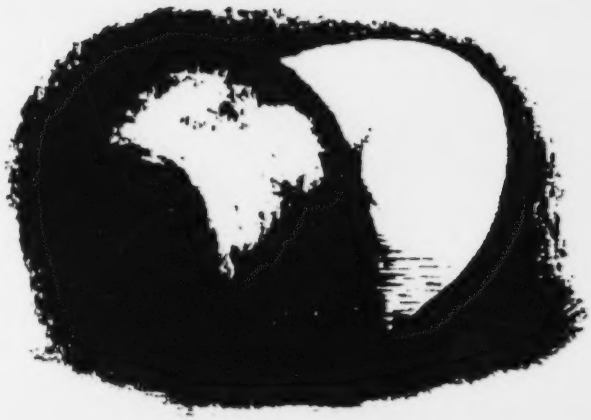
There's something special about apples
That people may not know.
In every apple there's a star.
It's right there as they grow.

Before you slice that apple
To see if this is true,
You have to stop and think about
A different thing to do.

If you cut from top to bottom,
The star you will not see.
But slice across the middle,
And right there it will be.

Now you, a very special child,
Have a star inside of you.
As you learn, and grow, to be yourself,
That star will shine right through.

Patricia Penn



A is for Apple

Slice an apple across the middle. Look for the star. Then cut the apple into bite-sized pieces. Talk about ways apples look, smell, and taste different from other fruits, such as bananas. Tell your child that the word "apple" starts with a different sound from the word "banana." Say both words slowly, then say that you are going to play a game called A is for Apple. Here is how it works: Your child picks up an apple piece to eat whenever you say a word that starts with the same sound as "apple" (alphabet, ask, add, am, ant, Annie, Alaska). She should shake her head "no" if you say a word that does *not* start with the same sound as apple (banana, ice, flower, clock, orange).

Famous Apple Sayings

Tell your child, "You are the apple of my eye." Explain that this saying means "You are very important to me and I care about you." Another famous saying is "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Explain that this saying means eating fresh food like apples helps people stay healthy.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Words Can Hurt

Remember the old rhyme children used to chant?

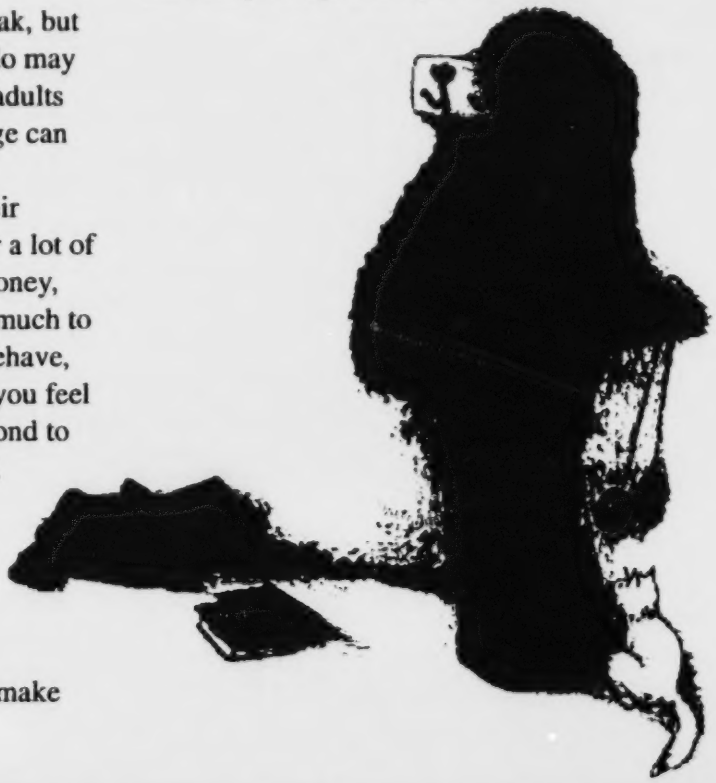
Sticks and stones may break my bones
But words can never hurt me.

How wrong that is! Bones may break, but they do heal. The harm that words can do may last far longer. When parents and other adults say hurtful things to children, the damage can be lifelong.

Most parents lose patience with their youngsters sometimes. People are under a lot of stress about such things as work, and money, and health problems. Everyone has too much to do and too little time. Children do misbehave, and it is all right to let them know how you feel about it. But it is very important to respond to the behavior, not to the child's total self.

Suppose your child has failed to hang up his jacket for what seems like the fiftieth time. A statement such as "You never do anything right" is both untrue and damaging. It is unlikely to change the behavior; it is very likely to make the child feel worthless.

Try something like this: "It upsets me when you throw your jacket on the floor. We agreed that you would hang it on the hook. Now, pick it up, please." Your child wants to please you. He also will probably see the fairness in what you say, and try to do better.



PS 031034

Your Friend the Toothbrush

Taking care of those first teeth is vital to your child's dental health. She is likely to keep up the good habits she learns now about caring for her teeth. Your good example is her best guide.

Brushing after meals is ideal, but not always possible. Talk with your child about why brushing is important. The substance that forms on teeth after eating is what causes decay. Brushing removes it. Show her how to rinse her mouth with water if she's out and can't brush.

Make brushing a pleasant activity. Colorful toothbrushes encourage brushing; they are available with favorite story characters on them. Your youngster might enjoy drawing on her brush handle or putting her initials on it. Any toothpaste that your child likes to use is fine.

A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Two Riddles

What did the letter say to the stamp?

Stick with me and you'll go places.

Why did the suspenders get arrested?

For holding up a pair of pants.

Your Moving Parts

Your child is still learning about his body parts. The game of touch is fun, and a good activity to practice following directions. It's good exercise, too. Take turns with him in doing the movements. Let him give you instructions part of the time.

Say to him: Please touch your—

- nose to your knee
- chin to your chest
- elbow to your hip
- toes to your nose
- elbow to your leg
- chin to your wrist
- wrist to your ankle
- ankle to your knee
- wrist to your waist
- knee to your chest
- wrist to your hip

If this is too easy for your child, add some variations. Ask him to touch his **right** hand to his **left** ankle, for example. Or have him touch his elbow to his **opposite** knee. This will give him practice with left and right and with the idea of opposites. Don't forget to enjoy your time together!

Color the square blue, the triangle red, the [illegible] yellow, and the circle green.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Getting Ready for Bed

Before I go to bed at night
there are things that I must do,
Like take a bath and brush my teeth
And pull the shade down, too.

Pick out the next day's clothes to wear
Make sure my shoes are in a pair.
Then just before I jump in bed,
Pick out a book that I'd like read.

I snuggle up and listen
to a story about some friends.
I snuggle up and listen well
and hope it never ends.

Before I know it, I'm nearly asleep.
The thoughts I have, I try to keep.
Then suddenly, off goes the light.
I feel a hug, and hear "Good night."

Ron Diss

Hunting for B's

Before you read the poem a second time, tell your child to give you the "thumbs up" sign with his left hand every time he hears the "b" sound. Touch his left hand to make sure he knows which hand to use. Read the poem a bit more slowly so he can hear the "b" at the beginning of the words *bed, before, bath, brush,* and so forth. You could also have him circle the "b" words.

A Memory Trick

Some children have trouble telling the difference between "b" and "d" in print. Here is something that might help. Tell your child to make fists on both hands, then stick out her thumbs like a hitchhiker. Show her that when she points her thumbs straight up, her left hand looks like a "b" and her right hand looks like a "d." When she puts them together, her hands look almost like the word "bed," with her thumbs sticking up like bedposts (see the illustration above). To help her remember, have her say the word "bed" slowly, squeezing her left hand as she makes the "b" sound and her right hand as she makes the "d" sound.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

What Did You Discover Today?

You would probably really like to know what your child did at school today. So you ask her, "How was school?" Or, "What did you do at school today?" And you get little or no information. The answer is likely to be "Fine" or "All right."

What you hoped for was something like: "It was fun. We learned about turkeys. We got to see a tractor, and learned how to be safe."

You might want to try something different. Ask an open-ended question such as "What was the most interesting thing you learned today?" Even if the answer is that her best friend has a new baby brother, you will have started a conversation with her. Children need lots of experience in using language.

Another helpful question: "What did you learn today that you would like to know more about?" Her response could result in a trip to the library for the two of you, or some kind of outing for the whole family.

Ask your child to play school with you, and let her be the teacher. Teaching someone else is a powerful way to learn. The way she plays school may not look like school as you remember it. In the best early school programs, children learn through experiences, not just paperwork. The teacher she plays might use a recipe, or read to you, or draw pictures with you.

She will love the attention you pay as she teaches. And you may be amazed at what your young learner can teach you.

PS 031034

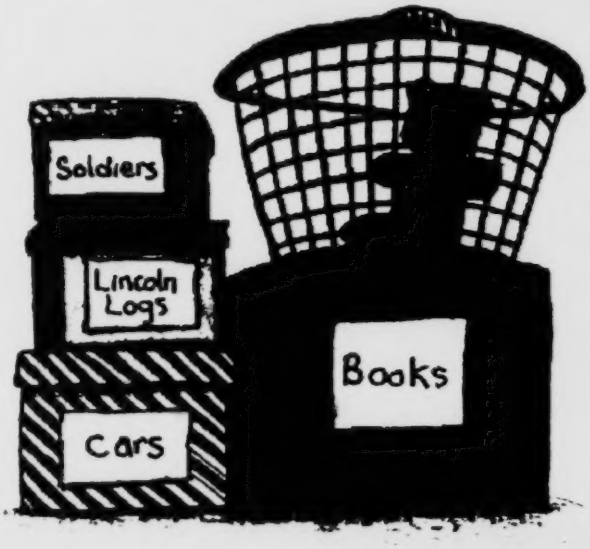
A Place for Everything

At school, children have a place where they can keep their own things. It may be a cubby or a locker where they store their coats and other belongings during school hours. You can transfer to your house what your child is learning at school about keeping track of his things. Help your child organize his space at home.

You can use boxes of any kind, small enough for him to handle. Shoe boxes are excellent for small toys and art supplies. Larger boxes and baskets will handle the big items. A laundry basket is great for the stuffed animals.

Together, label the boxes. Print in large letters with a marking pen. He may be able to do some of the printing with your help. Having words on objects he uses daily will help him learn the words. He will also see how written language is useful in his life.

He could also decorate the boxes. Drawing pictures or cutting them from magazines and pasting them on the boxes will be fun to do together. You get many benefits from this activity: language skills, art, and maybe a neater room for your child!



More Books to Read Together

Two Bad Ants	**Chris Van Allsburg**
Ornery Morning	**Patricia Brennan Demuth**
The First Forest	**John Gile**
Ruby	**Maggie Glenn**
The Three Little Javelinas	**Susan Lowell**
Suddenly!	**Colin McNaughton**
And the Dish Ran Away with the Spoon	**Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel**

Have your child draw a line from each crayon to its color word.

Another Read-Aloud
These Little Piggies

This little piggy went to market
and had a wonderful time helping his mom
shop for oatmeal and melons
and much, much more.

This little piggy stayed home
and had fun helping her dad wash the car
and rake the yard
and eat up all the strawberries.

This little piggy had roast beef
with mashed potatoes
and gravy
and pecan pie.

This little piggy had none
because she preferred yogurt
and fresh veggies
and very little fat.

This little piggy cried wee, wee, wee
all the way home
because she lost her mittens
and it was the third pair this year.
But she felt better after her mom gave her a hug.

Patricia Penn

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

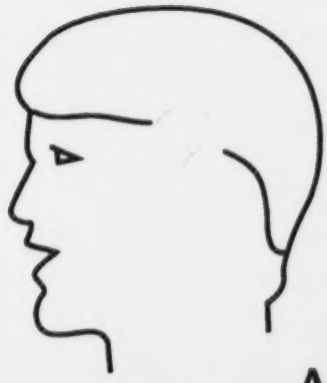
Just Imagine

What if people walked upside down?
What if we didn't have numbers?
What if light switches disappeared?
Or cake tasted like cucumbers?

What if we didn't have scissors?
What if the stars didn't twinkle?
What if there were no music?
(Not even a ding or a tinkle?)

What if we couldn't
imagine . . .

adapted from "Think About This" by Patricia Penn



Use Imagination

This little poem is a chance for your child to use her imagination. Read it aloud first. Then go back and talk about the questions. Encourage all kinds of answers. Some of the questions could be difficult for younger children. Just remember—there are many different ways to answer each one.

A Clue About Questions

The next time you read this poem, have your child sit to your left. Use your finger to point to the words as you read. At the end of each line, pause and ask your child to touch the question mark. Tell him, "This squiggly line is not a letter of the alphabet. It is called a question mark, and it is shaped like an ear to remind us to listen for an answer after every question." On a sheet of paper, draw a large question mark and help your child make it into a drawing of an ear on a face.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Never Too Old for Hugs

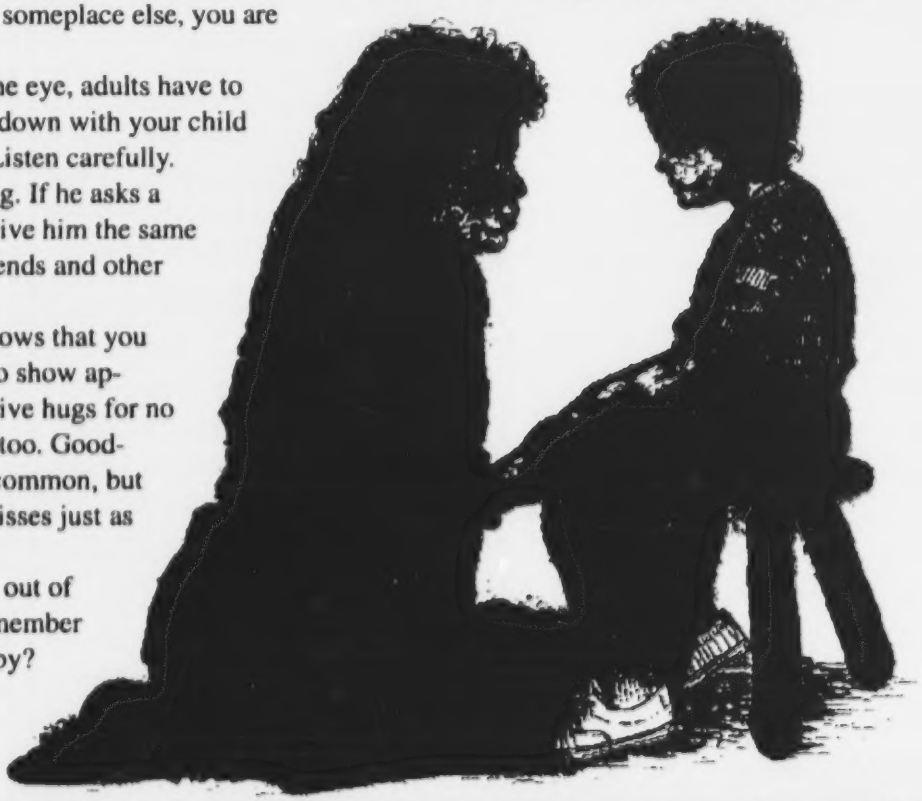
Sometimes, actions speak louder than words. Your child will react to your body language and facial expressions as much as to your words.

Look your child in the eyes to show him that you are paying attention. If you say, "That's interesting, son" and look someplace else, you are mixing your message.

To look children in the eye, adults have to move down. Kneel, or sit down with your child when you talk with him. Listen carefully. Show that you are listening. If he asks a question, think about it. Give him the same respect you show your friends and other adults.

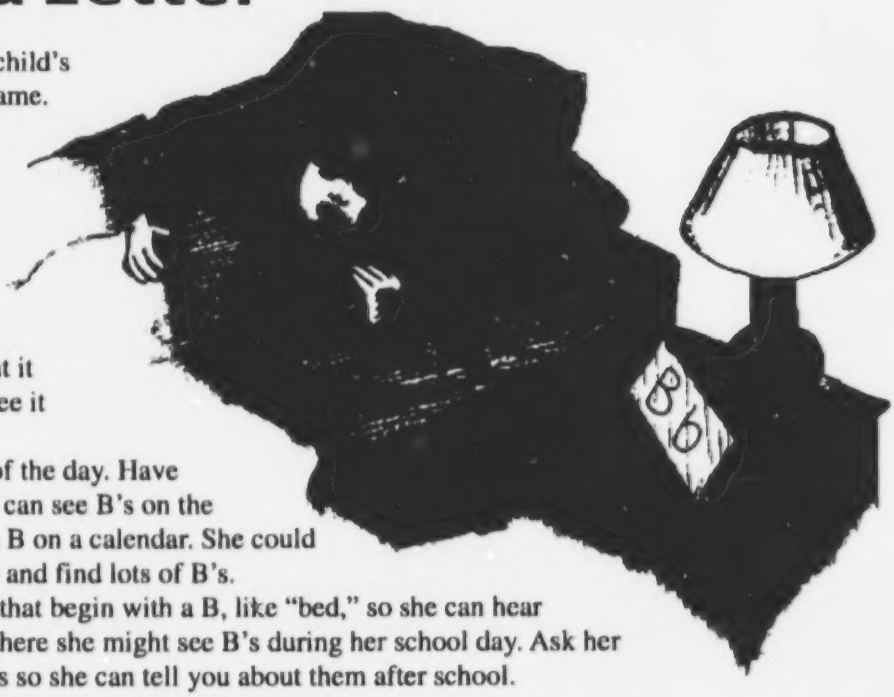
Touch him. Touch shows that you care. Give hugs, not just to show approval, or as a greeting. Give hugs for no reason at all. Give kisses, too. Good-night kisses are the most common, but kids love good-morning kisses just as much.

It's sad that we grow out of hugging our children. Remember when your child was a baby? Didn't you urge him to give hugs and kisses? "Give Daddy a kiss." "Grandma wants a kiss." "Show Auntie what good hugs you give." Chances are that when he gave hugs, he got hugs in return. That message is good for a lifetime.



PS 031034

Look for a Letter



You can increase your child's interest in letters with this game. Just before she goes to bed, write her name on a piece of paper. Have her choose one of the letters. Together, print the letter on a piece of cardboard. Suppose the letter is B. Do a capital B and a small b. Put it beside her bed, so she will see it when she wakes up.

That will be her letter of the day. Have her look for B's all day. She can see B's on the cereal box. She might find a B on a calendar. She could look at cans in the cupboard and find lots of B's.

You can tell her words that begin with a B, like "bed," so she can hear the sound. Suggest places where she might see B's during her school day. Ask her to remember some of the B's so she can tell you about them after school.

At bedtime, she can choose a new letter for tomorrow.

Big and Small Voices

Children sometimes have trouble knowing when it is okay to use a loud (big) voice and when to use a soft (small) voice. Spend a little time to make clear what you expect.

First, practice "loud" and "soft." Ask your child to say something to you in a loud voice. "Can you hear me?" is a good test question. After he says it loudly to you, have him ask the same question in a soft voice. Show how "soft" can be different: he can speak in a whisper or in a voice that you can hear across the dinner table.

Now, talk about when to use a loud voice. One example is speaking loudly to call for help. Another is calling the dog—or calling a child in from play outdoors! He might use the example of a loud voice to show anger.

Ask him to think of times when it is important to use a soft voice. For instance, using a soft voice is important when the baby is sleeping.

Some families use the description "indoor voice," as in: "We're going into the library. Use your indoor voice, please." Or, "We're going to the football game tonight. You can use your outdoor voice there."

Ask your child how many green cars there are.

Easy Pizza Circles

Pizza circles are easy to prepare and nutritious. Children love this snack because each child can have an individual pizza just her size. Let her help you prepare them.

You need English muffins, prepared spaghetti sauce, and thinly sliced or shredded cheese. Mozzarella cheese is the kind used on real pizza. You can use your child's favorite cheese of almost any type: cheddar, Swiss, or longhorn will do just fine.

Toast as many muffin halves as you need. Let your little helper spread spaghetti sauce on each half. Cover with the cheese. Put these mini pizzas on a cookie sheet. Cook in a 400-degree oven until the cheese melts and browns lightly.

A good way to get your child to eat some extra vegetables is to slice them onto the pizzas. Use green or red peppers, onions, broccoli, or any other veggies you have on hand. Precook the vegetable slices if your family doesn't like them crisp. You can put the veggies under the cheese or on top of it.

If You're Happy

Just for fun, here is a song for you and your youngster to sing together. Sing the verse through, then ask your child to sing with you. Both of you can think of many other movements to add verses: rub your chin, pat your tummy, pull your ear. If you don't know the tune, make one up.

If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands [clap,clap].

If you're happy and you know it
clap your hands [clap,clap].

If you're happy and you know it,
And you really want to show it,

If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands [clap,clap].

This is a good song for the whole family to do together. Everyone can take turns suggesting new verses. After you have done as many verses as you want, talk about what kinds of things make each of you happy.

How many red ones? How many total?

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

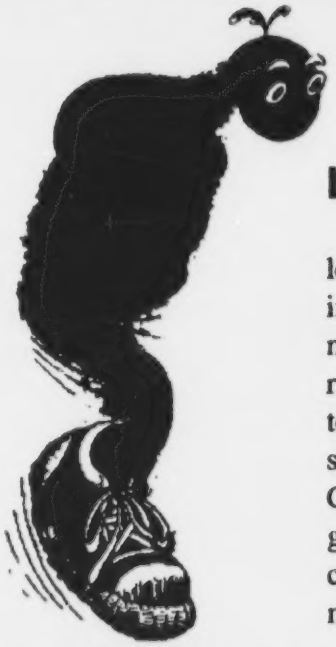
One-Shoe Billy

One-shoe Billy
sure looks silly
jumping up and down.

He hopped in goo
and lost his shoe
and it was never found.

Now he slithers
like an "S" that
slides across the ground.

Carla Thomas McClure

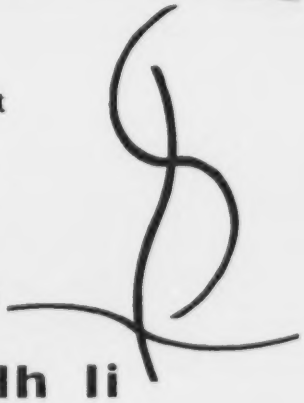


Letter Hunt

Write your child's name in large letters. Ask him to circle the first letter in his name and tell you what sound his name starts with. Walk through the rooms in your house (or walk outside) to hunt for objects that start with the same sound as his name. For example, Gavin might name glass, grapes, games, and gum. Another time, you could try the same thing using his middle name or last name.

String Snakes

Find a piece of twine, yarn, old shoelaces, or other pieces of string at least 12 inches long. Or you could use a pipecleaner. Then show your child how to make a "string snake" in the shape of the lettter S. Let her use the string to make other letter shapes, too. If you have several strings, she might use them to form her name or some other word. For each letter she makes, encourage her to say the letter's name and tell you what sound it makes.



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii

Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr

Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

What Children Need Every Day

Every day children need encouragement to explore, to learn about their world, and to discover things that are new to them.

You can encourage your child.

Every day children need to celebrate what they accomplish. They need to spend time with adults who are interested in them and care about them.

You can celebrate with your child.

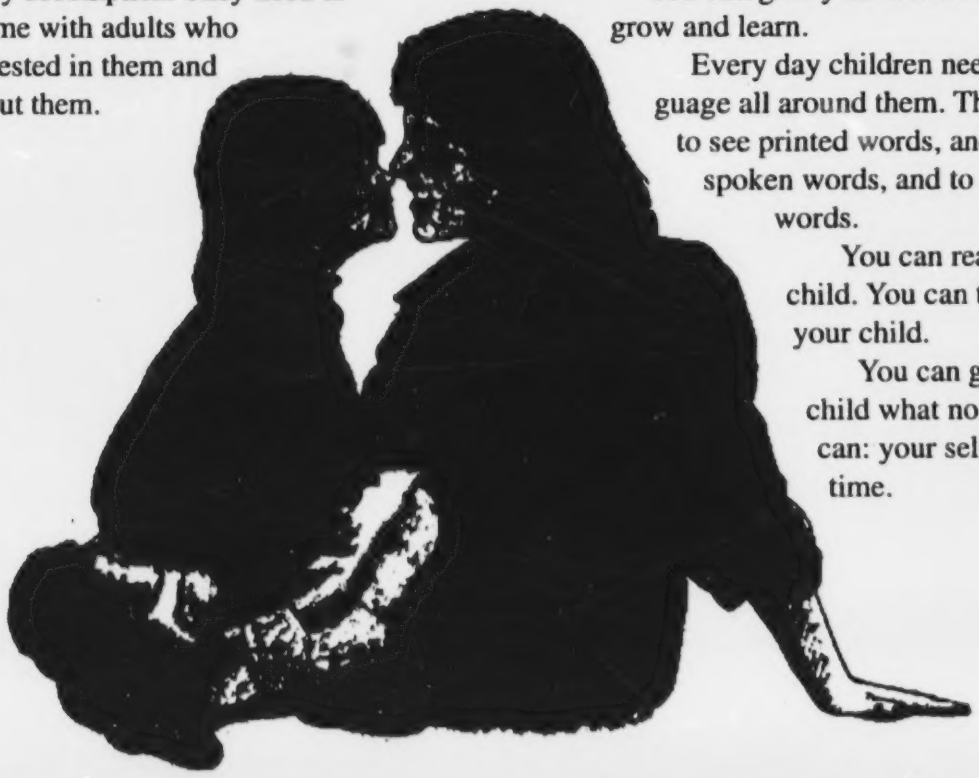
Every day children need to be protected from harsh punishment, from too much disapproval. They need room to be curious, room for trial-and-error learning.

You can give your child room to grow and learn.

Every day children need language all around them. They need to see printed words, and hear spoken words, and to speak words.

You can read to your child. You can talk to your child.

You can give your child what no one else can: your self and your time.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

A Fill-in-the-Blanks Story

This is a story for your child to complete any way she likes. Explain to her that she may decide what words go in the blank spaces. As you read aloud, pause to give her time to decide what she wants to say.

If you read the story with more than one child, let them take turns filling in the blanks. You and your child could also do the story together. Or you can do all of these variations.

Once upon a time, I knew a purple _____. He lived in _____, and shared everything with a _____. Together, they built _____ and started a _____.

When spring came, they _____. I don't know why the purple _____. That's what happened. If I ever see another purple _____, I will be sure to _____.

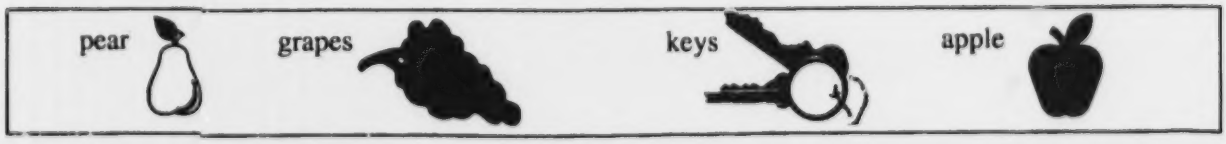
She may like one of the stories so much she will want you to write it down for her. Let her choose a title for the story and print her name on it.

One version of the story goes like this. Read it to your child after she has done one of her own.

The Purple Hippopotamus

Once upon a time, I knew a purple *hippopotamus.* He lived in *West Waterfall,* and shared everything with a *grandma hippo and four young tigers.* Together, they built a *tree house,* and started a *banana cake business.*

When spring came, they *decided to add turnip cake to their business.* I don't know why the purple *hippopotamus thought his customers would like turnip cake. They didn't like it, and didn't buy it, and the business closed.* That is what happened. If I ever see another purple *hippo,* I will be sure to *warn him about turnip cake.*



Three pictures in each box are alike in some way.

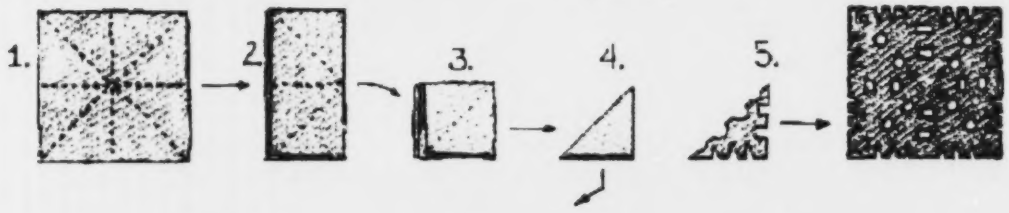
Summer Snowflakes

This is an activity that looks like art, but it is also related to math. It helps young children begin to get a sense of geometric patterns. You will enjoy doing this with your child. Have fun, and keep it simple.

You will need paper and safety scissors. Newspaper works well because it is not too heavy. If you use plain white paper, use the thinnest paper you have.

1. Start with a six-inch-square piece of paper.
2. Have your child fold the square in half.
3. Fold it in half again.
4. Fold it in half again, on the diagonal.
5. Cut out simple shapes.

When you unfold the paper, there—as if by magic—is a snowflake. Your child will love making them. Talk about how every child, like every snowflake, is different and special.



Bake a Puddle Cake

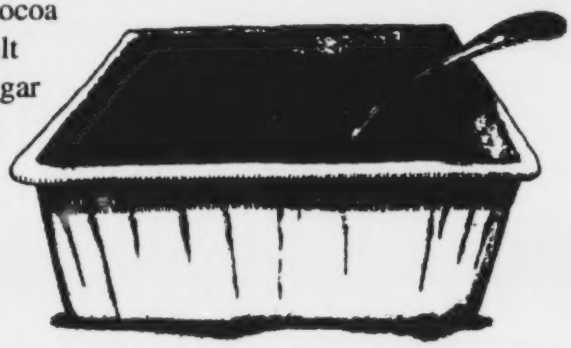
Here is an easy recipe with a funny name that your child will enjoy helping you bake. Let him do the measuring.

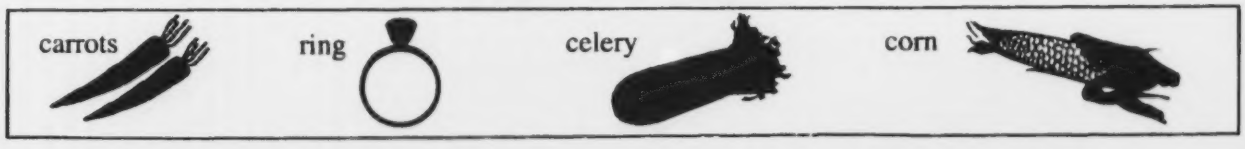
Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Sift into an ungreased 8" x 8" x 2" pan:

- 1 and 1/2 cups sifted flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons cocoa
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup brown sugar

Make a puddle in the center by adding 6 tablespoons of salad oil, 1 teaspoon vanilla, and 1 tablespoon vinegar. Pour 1 cup cold water into the puddle. Let your child stir with a big spoon until the mixture is smooth. Bake the cake for 35 to 40 minutes.

He can practice his numbers by cutting a serving for each family member's dessert.





Have your child draw an "X" through the picture that is not like the others.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Those Perfectly Wonderful Pandas

If you see a Panda,
I know you won't forget.
They are SO big and black
and white
They are the cutest, yet.

They don't eat meat.
They don't eat grain.
You'll laugh at what they crave.

They eat bamboo.
It's true, they do.
They eat bamboo each day.

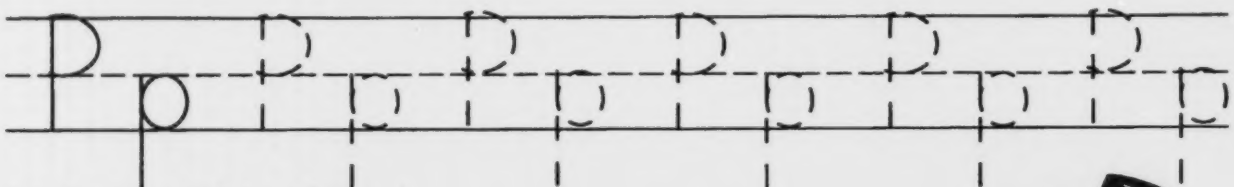
They strip each branch
and chew the leaves,
and then they crunch the rest.

They sit and eat so quietly,
Their manners are the best,
And when they're done,
You'll wish that one
Could come and be your guest!

Patricia Penn

P is for Panda

Have your child trace the letter and say the "p" sound as she traces. Let her do this with other letters, too. Begin with her name.



Listen and Learn

Tell your child to circle the picture that shows what Pandas eat.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

When They Grow Up

"What are you going to be when you grow up?" is a question children hear often. Many very young children welcome the question, and enjoy giving an answer. Later, it is harder to answer this difficult question.

Young children will, in most cases, change their answers often—weekly, or even daily. Your child may want to be an astronaut on Monday, a firefighter on Tuesday, and a basketball player on Friday. She may not understand what it takes to be any of these things, but that isn't important at this stage.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" is an important question, though, and it is very important that you treat her answer seriously. Treat it with respect, even if it is going to be different tomorrow. Having dreams for the future helps children to be successful learners.

Some research shows that having a vision of their future is more important than children's IQ in predicting their success. It is also more important than how much money the family has, or its social standing.

Encourage your child to want to succeed. This does not mean pushing her too hard and hurrying her childhood. Time for play is time for learning. But let her know that you believe in her ability to be what she dreams of being.

Your confidence in your child gives her confidence in herself.

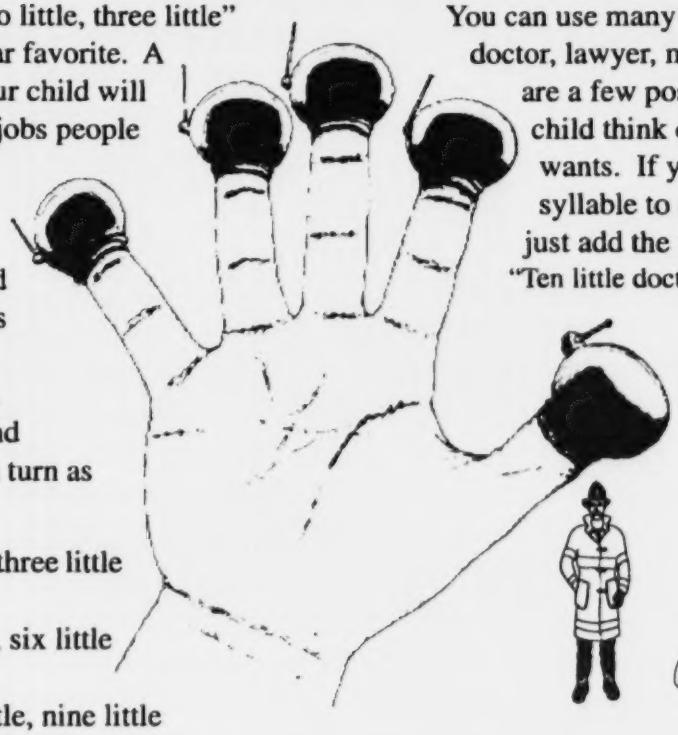
PS 031034

One Little, Two Little

The "one little, two little, three little" tune may be a familiar favorite. A variation you and your child will enjoy uses names of jobs people do.

Let each finger be one of whatever occupation your child chooses. Astronaut is an example. Do the song with your child. Start with a thumb and wiggle each finger in turn as you sing or chant.

One little, two little, three little
astronauts...
Four little, five little, six little
astronauts...
Seven little, eight little, nine little
astronauts...
Ten little astronauts.



You can use many other job titles: doctor, lawyer, miner, and firefighter are a few possibilities. Let your child think of as many as she wants. If you need an extra syllable to complete the rhythm, just add the word "here," as in "Ten little doctors here."

A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Shopping for Shapes and Sizes

Next time you and your youngster go to the grocery store, look for shapes in the produce section.

What is round and big? Grapefruit, cabbage, and melon are some choices.

What is round and small? Look for oranges, some potatoes, some limes.

What is long and thin? How about carrots, celery stalks, asparagus, and young squash?

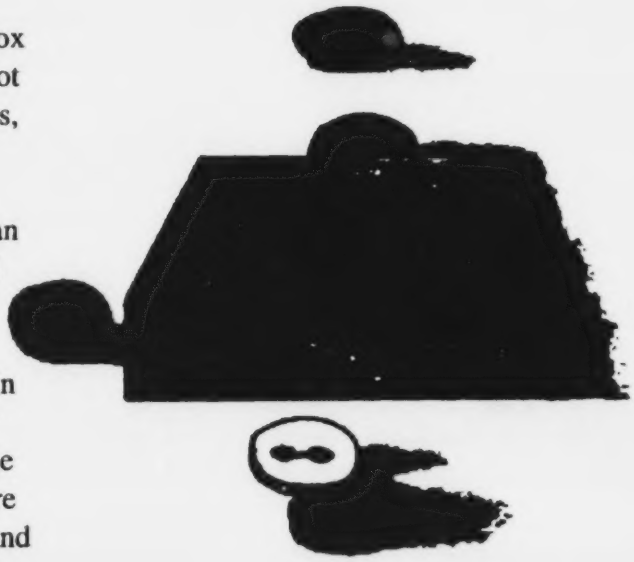
He will enjoy looking for unusual shapes: bananas, string beans, and pea pods are a few. You might discover a vegetable that is new to you, such as jicama, which comes in many strange shapes.

Buttons in the Box

This game makes giving and taking directions fun. To play, you need a small box with a lid and several buttons. (If you do not have a button collection, use beans, pennies, or bottle caps.)

You can begin by giving the first direction. "Put a button in the box." You can use *on, over, under, in front of, behind,* and *beside*. Take turns giving and following directions.

To add variety, use different numbers in the direction: "Put 6 buttons in the box" or "Put 3 buttons **under** the box." To make the game more of a challenge, give two or more directions: "Put 1 button **behind** the box, and 2 buttons **in front of** the box."

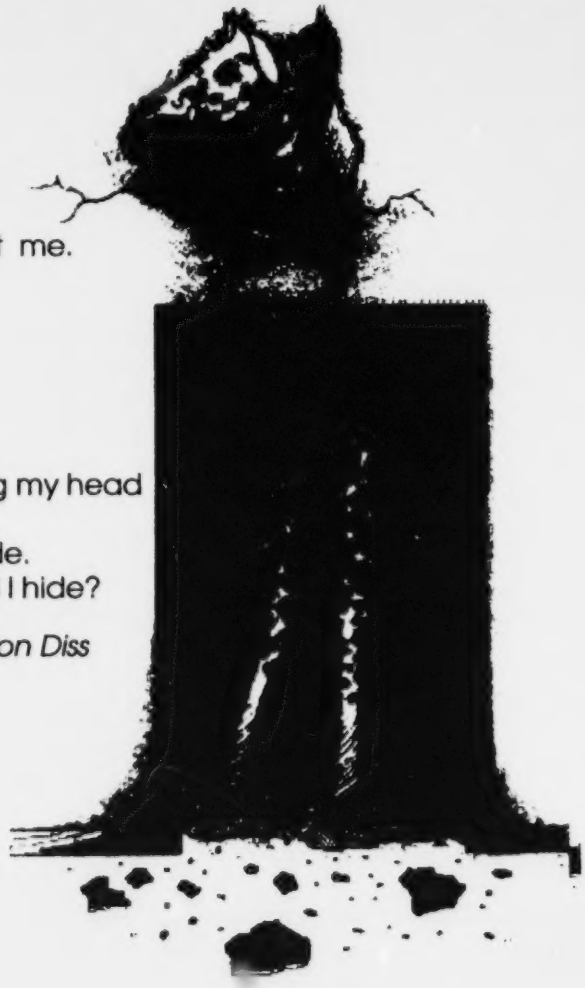


watermelon orange apple rabbit lemon

Touch and name each picture. Have your child circle things that have seeds inside.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

If I Were Tall



If I were tall, tall like Mister Giraffe,
There are lots of fun things I could do.
I could look all around—
I could look down, down, down!
My friends on the ground would look up at me.
I'd talk to the birds in the tallest trees.
And best of all, I could run really fast—
I could run just as fast as I please!

But if I were tall, like Mister Giraffe,
There are things I could no longer do,
Like run through the door without bumping my head
Or snuggle up under my blanket in bed,
Or get on a school bus and take a nice ride.
And, out on the playground, where would I hide?

Ron Diss

Read with Me

Have your child sit beside you, to your left. As you read the poem, point to each word with your finger. Tell him that the spaces between words help you to see where new words begin.

Think Big

Ask your child, "What other animals might be too big to fit through the door?" You might also ask, "If you were as tall as a giraffe, what are some things you could do that you can't do now?" Some of her answers might come from the poem, but she might think of other answers as well.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

The Apple of Your Eye

You know your child—the apple of your eye—better than anyone else does. You can make your child's experiences in school happier by letting his teacher know important things about him.

Some of the things teachers say they like to know about children:

- their likes and dislikes
- things that make them sad or afraid
- things that make them happy
- their favorite toys
- their best-loved books
- health problems

Another thing that is helpful for teachers to know is what time of day your child is at his best. Some of us are most efficient and productive early in the day. Others start more slowly and last longer.

You may know all these things about your child without needing time to think about it. Some you may not have considered. Spend some time with your child talking about those things. Then take time for a visit with his teacher. Everyone will benefit—especially the apple of your eye.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

Fun with Numbers

You can help your child get ready for math and learn to enjoy it. This activity uses matching pairs of objects. You and your child can do this number game with bottle caps, buttons, marbles, spoons, coins—whatever you have on hand.

Put a pair of each object into a box. Take out five objects that do not match and place them in a row. Ask your youngster to take items from the box and make a row to match the row you created.

Have him talk about each item as he puts it in place: "The first thing is a bottle cap. The second thing is a spoon." For variety, pick up the items and create a new model for him to complete. Then let him make a model for you to follow. Be sure you also describe each item as you put it down. Last, name all the objects in order to help your child understand patterns.

Apple-of-My-Eye Book

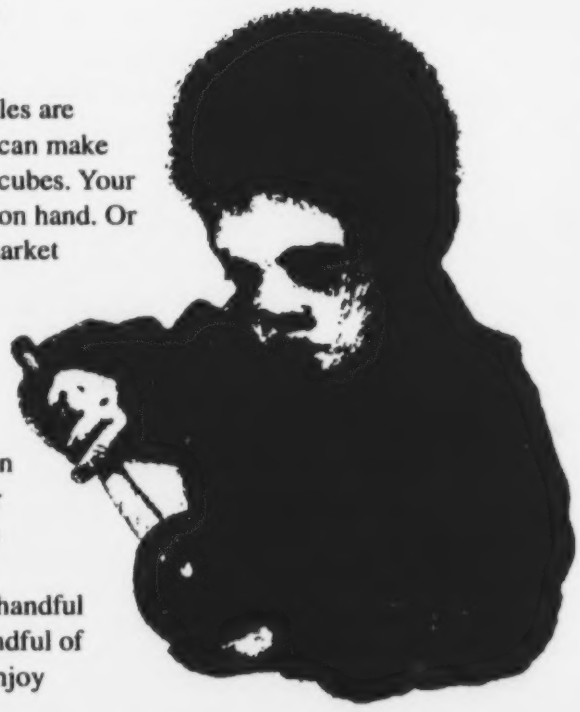
Your child would cherish a book that you can make together about her. You can make a blank book as a merry-unbirthday gift for her. Fold a few sheets of standard typing paper in half. Staple or stitch them on the folded side.

Draw a big red apple on the first sheet to make a picture frame. Glue a photo of your child in the frame. Print a title: "(your child's name) is the apple of my eye."

Set aside some time for the two of you to spend together. Ask her to tell you some of her favorite things so you can write them in the book. The topics listed on the front page of this issue will make an interesting little volume that both of you will love.

Let your child finish coloring the circles of the caterpillars.

Beary Good Soup



Even children who turn up their noses at vegetables are likely to eat vegetable soup that they help make. You can make quick stock if you use some beef or chicken bouillon cubes. Your child can choose vegetables from whatever you have on hand. Or have him help you make a list and take a trip to the market together. If you have a recipe you like, fine. If not, you can make up soup as you go along.

Use carrots, potatoes, celery, peas, corn, green beans, and tomatoes. Even very young children can wash the vegetables. With your help, your child might be able to do some peeling and scraping. He can also cut vegetables as you supervise. It doesn't matter whether slices are even, or how finely the veggies are chopped.

To make the soup really special, let him put in a handful of bear pasta or alphabet pasta, if it's available. A handful of elbow macaroni or rice will do just as well. He will enjoy sprinkling salt and other seasonings.

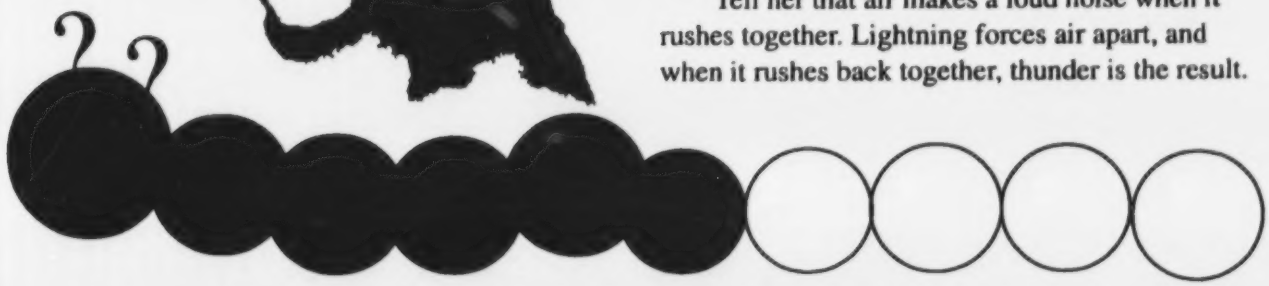
Talk with your budding scientist about how the vegetables change as they cook. You can talk about colors and tastes, too.

What Makes Thunder

Thunderstorms scare some children. Others find thunder and lightening exciting. However your child feels about thunder, it offers a good learning opportunity.

With a paper bag, your child can make a big bang and learn about thunder. Have her blow into the bag until it fills with air. Show her how to hold the bag's neck tightly so the air can't escape. When she hits the bag with the other hand, the bag will break with a loud crack.

Tell her that air makes a loud noise when it rushes together. Lightning forces air apart, and when it rushes back together, thunder is the result.



On this page, ask your child to follow the orange-blue-red color pattern .

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

True or False?

Is it so? Is it so?
Clap twice for Yes,
(clap two times)
Three times for No.
(clap three times)

Pigs can talk.
Birds can fly.
Tables walk in the sky.

Rain falls up.
Babies cry.
Apples are blue.
Kites go high.

Horses eat hay.
Kittens do, too.
I like pizza.
So do you.

Patricia Penn

Listen and Choose

This special read-aloud gives your child a chance to practice listening and choosing. When you read the line "Pigs can talk," for example, she will clap three times. Be sure to allow plenty of time. You might want to read through the whole verse once before doing any clapping. You and she can add lots of other choices. It doesn't matter whether they are in rhymes.

Write a Story

Ask, "What do you think the pigs in the picture might be talking about?" See if the two of you can make up a story about the pigs. Or show your child a picture from a magazine and ask him to make up a story about it. Write what he says on a sheet of paper. Print neatly. Then read the story back to him, pointing to each word you say. It might be only two or three lines, but he will enjoy the magic of seeing his words in print.

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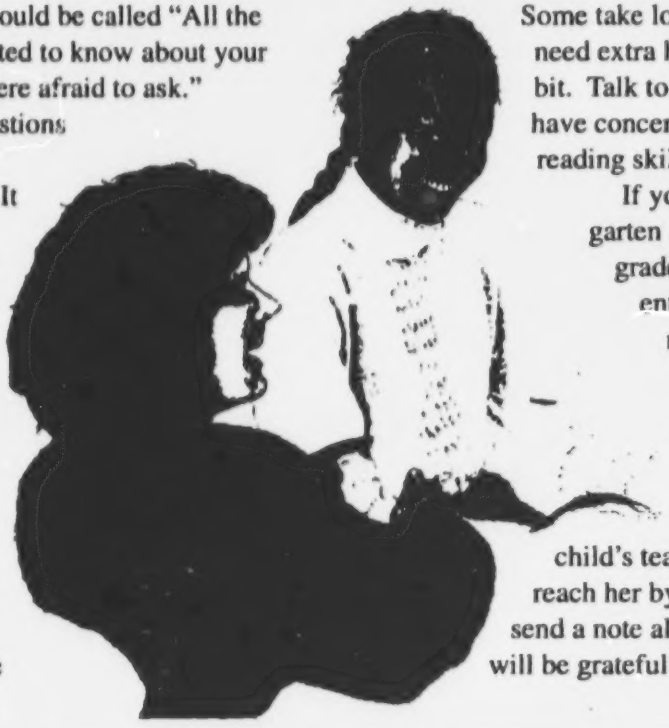
FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Ask Your Child's Teacher

This message could be called "All the things you ever wanted to know about your child's school but were afraid to ask." Below are some questions parents ask their children's teachers. It is important to ask about anything that concerns you; teachers welcome the opportunity to talk with you about what you can expect.

Many parents want to know when their children will learn to read. Most can read by the time they are seven.



Some take longer than others. Some need extra help. Children learn bit by bit. Talk to your child's teacher if you have concerns about your child's reading skills.

If you visit the school, kindergarten and the early elementary grades could look very different from the way you remember them. Your child's school may have new ways of teaching and use new kinds of materials. Be in touch with your child's teacher. It may be hard to reach her by telephone, but you can send a note along with your child. She will be grateful for your interest.

- What kinds of things will my child do in your class?
- How do you teach children to read and write?
- Will she learn math this school year?
- Where does she play at school?
- Will she bring work home to do after school?
- How many children are in her class?
- Can I visit the school during the day and come to your class?
- Will we have meetings to talk about my child?
- How do you discipline my child?

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

Rhymes with Numbers

Read aloud with your child to help her complete the verse with the number that rhymes with the word in bold type.

If you think of a shining **sun**
The **number** that rhymes with **sun**
is ____.

If you think of a basketball **shoe**
The **number** that rhymes with **shoe** is ____.

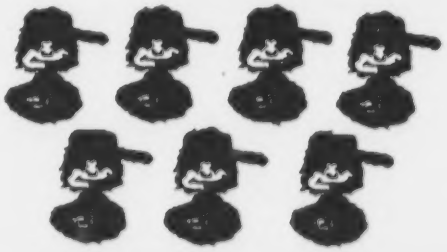
If you think of an evergreen **tree**
The **number** that rhymes with **tree** is ____.

If you think of an open **door**
The **number** that rhymes with **door** is ____.

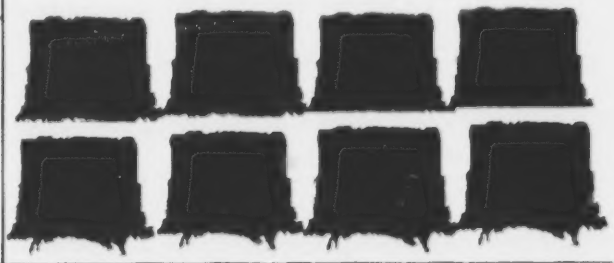
If you think of bees in a **hive**
The **number** that rhymes with **hive** is ____.

If you want to pick up **sticks**
The **number** that rhymes with **sticks** is ____.

If you know someone named **Kevin**
The **number** that rhymes with **Kevin** is ____.

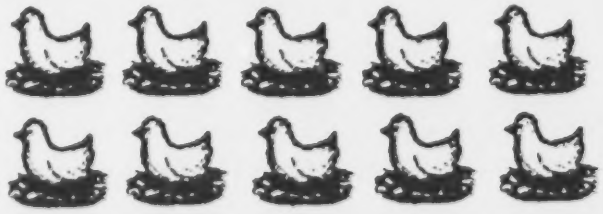


If you want to think of a wooden **gate**
The **number** that rhymes with **gate** is ____.



If you put things in a **line**
The **number** that rhymes with **line** is ____.

If you see a big, fat **hen**
The **number** that rhymes with **hen** is ____.



You Decide

This is a way to let your child get some practice in making decisions and have fun, too.

Plan with her to have a pretend party. She can have any refreshments she wants, but no more than four items. Encourage her to make a long list of her choices first. Write down the list so she can cross off the things she decides to omit. Then make a final list of her four selections.

Do the same thing with people she would like to invite. Since this is a pretend party she is planning, she could think of people or characters in stories, television shows, movies and other famous people to invite. Limit the number of people to six. As she makes her final choices, you can talk together about her reasons for choosing certain people. Let her make name cards or invitations, if she wants.

You Can Make a Rainbow

One of life's wonders is rainbows. Children especially love them, and they don't come along as often as your child would like. You can make one with a glass of water, a small mirror, and some sunshine.

Give your child a glass about half full of water. Let him put a small mirror in the glass and set it where sun can shine on the mirror. He can then turn the glass until rainbow colors reflect against the wall or ceiling.

This type of activity helps your child develop curiosity about how things happen. When he asks questions you can't answer, suggest ways that you can learn things together. Take him to the library often; it's still a great place for finding out "why."

Have your child draw a line from each crayon to its color word.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

When I Learn to Read

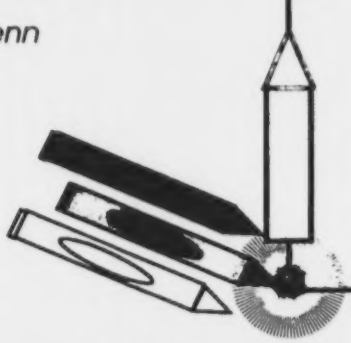
As soon as I begin to read,
There'll be no stopping me.
I'll travel where I want to go
And be what I want to be.

I'll know what causes birds to fly
And how whales swim so far.
I'll learn to bake the biggest cake
And build a model car.

I'll sail aboard a pirate ship.
I'll climb up Mount Rainier.
I'll even go to outer space
And need no special gear.

It's magic when you learn to read.
There's no place you can't go
For on the pages of some book
Is all you want to know.

Patricia Penn



Draw Me a Picture

Ask your child to draw a picture of something the poem says you can learn from books. Now, ask him to draw a picture of something he would like to know more about. (You will need an extra piece of paper.)

Make a Special Trip

Visit your local library with your child. Help her get a library card and check out a children's book that interests her. While you are there, get a book that interests you, too. Seeing you read will make her want to read. (If getting to the library is a problem, call the library to find out if a bookmobile comes to your neighborhood. Also, some libraries have special programs for homebound people.)

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Teach Respect by Respecting

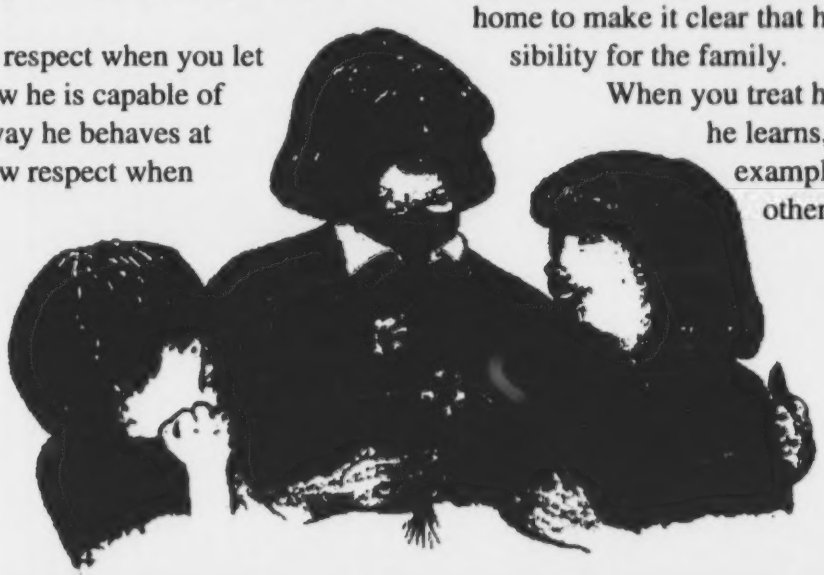
We hear a lot of talk about how kids have no respect for adults these days. We expect children to respect their parents and other adults. It's too bad that adults so often don't respect children. Respect, like most things, is best learned by example.

Children need to learn many behaviors and skills to become able to function on their own. If you have faith in your child's ability to learn, and if you show it, you are respecting your child.

You show respect when you let your child know he is capable of changing the way he behaves at times. You show respect when you let him make choices, and you are careful to give him choices he is able to make. You show respect when you let him think for himself and encourage him to tell you what he is thinking.

You respect him when you find ways to let him practice skills. You respect him with discipline that helps him learn self-control. You respect him when you listen to him. You respect him when you give him tasks to do at home to make it clear that he shares responsibility for the family.

When you treat him with respect, he learns, from your good example, to respect others.



Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

Soap and Pepper

Here is an experiment that may surprise you as it provides scientific fun for your child. You need a cup or bowl of water, black pepper, a small piece of soap, and a little sugar.

Have your child sprinkle pepper on the water and see it float.

Now dip the soap into the water. What happens to the pepper? (It should float away from the soap.)

Now sprinkle sugar into the water. What happens? (The pepper should run toward the sugar.)

When he asks why—and he surely will—tell him that the soap gives off an oily film that drives the pepper away. Sugar acts like a sponge, and draws water to it. The pepper follows along. (Wood shavings or bits of cork will behave in the same way as the pepper.)

Colors That You Eat

The next time you and your child are at the grocery store together, see how many different colors you can find among the fruits and vegetables. As you count the colors, you can talk about how many different shades of the same color you can see.

For example, look for the color **red.** There are red tomatoes, apples, strawberries, and beets, and not one is the same red.

Other colors to watch for:

yellow—lemons, squash, pears, bananas

orange—tangerines, carrots, oranges

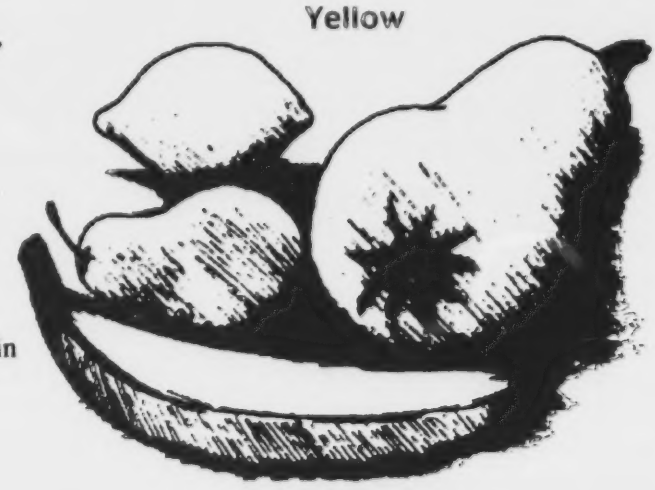
green—lettuce, spinach, limes

white—cauliflower, onions, garlic

purple—eggplant, grapes, cabbage

Some vegetables come in more than one color. Cabbage, for instance, can be green—or, in some cases, close to white. One variety of lettuce is called red, but the leaves are also green.

There is lots to talk about here, and there are many questions for your child to think of.



Have your child show Freda Frog how to get to her lily pad.

Clip the Numbers

With a box of paper clips and some cardboard pieces, you and your child can play a very useful numbers game. Your child will have fun while she learns about forming sets, an important math skill, and practices counting. She will also learn to use paper clips, which is good for finger dexterity.

Write large numbers from 1 through 9 on cardboard pieces. (Index cards are handy for this.) On the edge of each card, put enough dots to match the number. Your child can then count the dots to know how many paper clips to clip on each card.

Some things to talk about as you play together: How many clips are on this card? How did you know how many to put on the card? Can you show me a card that has the same number of clips that you are old? How about a card that has

fewer clips than your age? Which card has the same number of clips as you have eyes? Which card has the number of clips that you have fingers on one hand?

You may think of other ways to play with the numbers. To end the game, ask her to lay out the cards on the table from the one having the smallest number of clips to the one with the largest number of clips.

Take Turns with Opposites

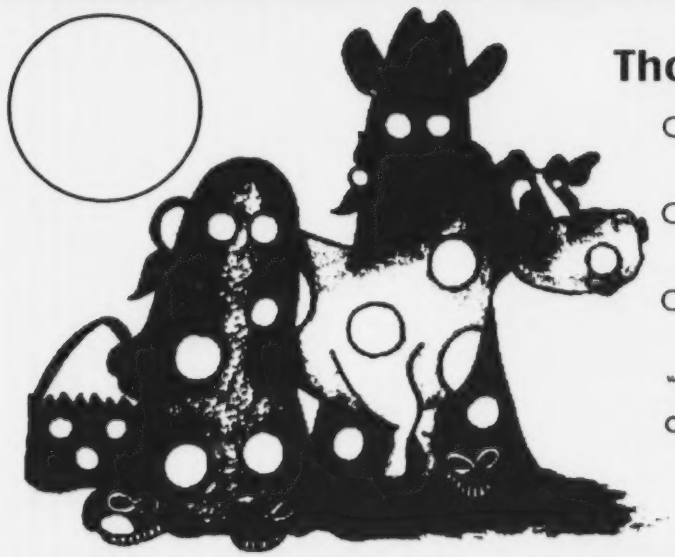
You and your youngster can make each other think as you take turns with opposites. First you think of a word, and ask her to say its opposite. Start with an easy pair. You say "in" and she will say "out."

Looking around the room will give you both ideas. The light switch makes you think of "off" and "on." The sink reminds you of "wet" and "dry" or "hot" and "cold."

People might remind you of opposites, too: "brother/sister" or "aunt/uncle." What the people look like could also suggest opposites: "short/tall" or "smiling/frowning."

As your child "finger-hops" to each stone, count aloud.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds



Those Handy O's

Oh! is what you say
to the bubbles that you blow.

Owl is what you say
when you bump into a cow.

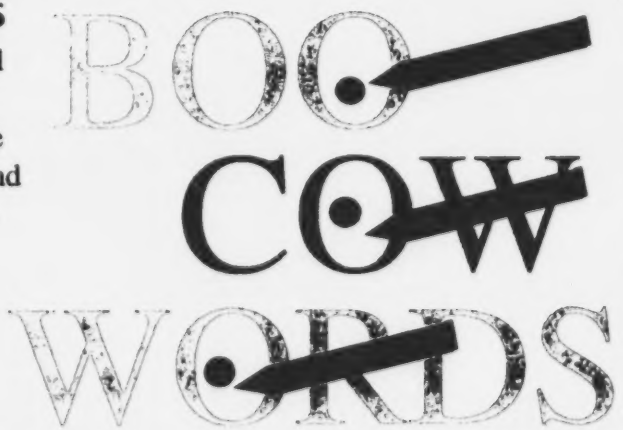
Ooh! is what you say
when a ghost says boo to you.

"O words" come in handy—
and I think you'll like them, too.

Carla Thomas McClure

Hearing a Letter's Sounds

Give your child a pencil or crayon. Tell her to color all the o's she can find on this page. You might need to show her that some o's are hidden in the picture above. Then read the poem aloud. Pause after every two-line verse and ask her to tell you a word that rhymes with the very last word (blow, cow, you). This will help her see the different sounds "o" can make.



I Spy

Tell your child to look around the room (or wherever you are) and name some things that are shaped like an "o." He might name cookies, oranges, marbles, eyes, doorknobs, and other things.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

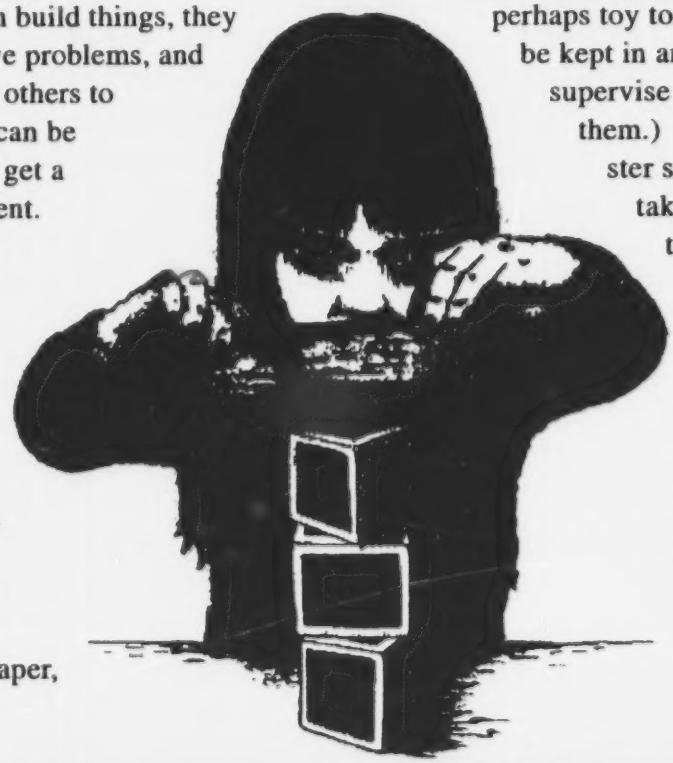
Builders Are Learners

Many children get a set of little alphabet blocks at an early age, and we tend to think they outgrow them by about five or six. The fact is, building blocks are important to children for many years. And they are just as important to girls as to boys.

When children build things, they make choices, solve problems, and learn to work with others to reach goals. They can be creative. They can get a sense of achievement.

A good set of wooden blocks of varied sizes and shapes is a super learning tool. But blocks are not the only good building materials. Save cardboard boxes of all sizes, tubes from paper towels and toilet paper, foam packing material, plastic containers, and empty spools. Keep pieces of foil wrap, fabric scraps, yarn, string, and colorful paper.

Put together a tool kit for your child. It can be a basket or shoe box. Include paste or school glue, a ruler, safety scissors, and perhaps toy tools. (Adult tools should be kept in another place, so you can supervise your child's use of them.) Work with your youngster sometimes, but let her take the lead. Building things all by herself can boost self-confidence. Knocking down one of her structures can give her a feeling of control.



We all construct our own learning. Building play is one of the best ways for children to learn.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

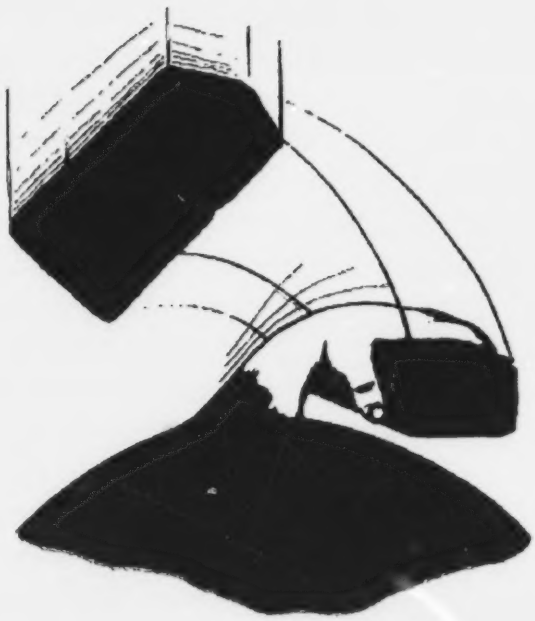
What Is Gravity?

Your child will be fascinated to learn about gravity. Gravity is a force that pulls everything downward toward the ground. It's fun to observe it and see how predictable it is.

Give your child an object that she can drop without breaking it. Have her drop it. Where does it go? To the ground (or floor, if you are indoors). Have her drop it again and again. Each time, ask a question: Will it fall to the ground this time? Will it fall up? Will it fall sideways?

You can vary the objects by shape and weight to add interest. She will see that both a spoon and a sponge fall down every time.

Most young children will not understand or be able to explain gravity. They will be able to predict from their own experience that something will always fall to the ground. (One little boy heard the word as "grabity." He said that when you drop something the earth grabs it and that's why it's called grabity. Not a bad explanation!)

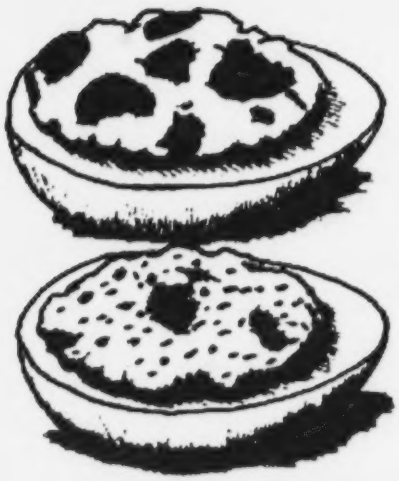


The important thing about this gravity game is that it arouses your child's interest in why things are the way they are. That's how scientists come to be.

A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Devil Some Eggs



Even children who don't like eggs will enjoy helping make deviled eggs. And they love the name. Ask your child what he thinks is the reason for the name. Be prepared to talk about why they are called "deviled." (Hint: The first recipes called for lots and lots of black pepper!)

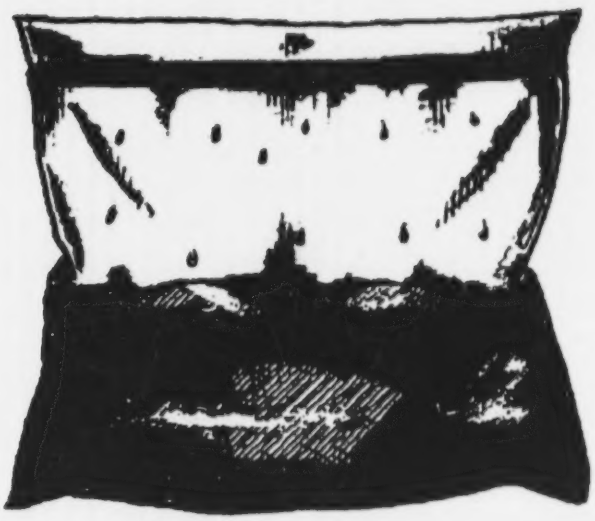
You need:

6 hard-boiled eggs
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 teaspoon prepared mustard
celery salt or other seasonings you like

Peel and cut eggs in half lengthwise. (Let your child do as much of this as he can. Ask him to count the tablespoons. Show him the difference in size between the tablespoon and teaspoon. Let him find out how many teaspoons it takes to make one tablespoon.) Mash the yolks with the mayonnaise and mustard. Some people like to add a little pickle juice.

Your child can stuff the yolk mixture into the white with a small spoon. He will enjoy decorating each egg with sliced olives or sprinkling on some paprika.

Sprouting Popcorn



Children love to see things grow from their own efforts. Your child will be surprised that he can do something with popcorn besides popping it to eat.

Give him a small zip-top plastic bag and some planting dirt. After he puts the dirt into the bag, he can add a few kernels of unpopped popcorn. Then he should add water to make the dirt fairly moist, and close the bag tightly. (You can use cotton balls instead of dirt, if you wish.)

Help him hang the bag in a sunny window. The kernels should begin to sprout in about a week.

Touch and name each picture. Ask your child to circle the things that rhyme with *me*.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Me in the Mirror

When I wake up,
in the mirror I see
a sleepy child
looking back at me.

I wash my face
and comb my hair;
I brush my teeth,
and find clothes to wear.

Then back at the mirror, I take a peek
before I go out to play.
The me I see seems to say to me:
"Wow! Don't we look great today!"

Ron Diss
adapted from "Me and My Mirror" by Patricia Penn

First Things First

Ask your child to tell you which of these morning activities comes first:

- Comb your hair, or get out of bed?
- Put shoes on, or put socks on?
- Go outside to play, or eat breakfast?

Draw a Favorite

Give your child some paper and a pencil or crayons and ask him to draw his favorite thing about morning. You might ask, "Is it breakfast? Looking outside? Brushing your teeth? Or something else?" Label the pictures with words.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Rewards for Learning

The best reward in learning comes from the feeling of joy and competence your child gets from knowing or doing something well. Using rewards such as food, stickers, and toys to get children to learn or try new things sends a message: learning is not worth pursuing for its own sake.

Too many rewards and too frequent praise can be distracting. It's better not to interrupt children to praise them for activities they are enjoying. Rewards sometimes increase productivity, but not interest.

Specific praise does strengthen interest, especially if it includes information about how well the child is doing the work. If you give positive feedback that is informative—"I like the way you arranged the toothpicks in your collage"—the child stays interested in the task.

Self-esteem grows in the course of children's interactions with people who are significant in their lives at home, in the community, and in the classroom. When children take on challenging tasks, overcome difficulties, and help others, their self-esteem becomes stronger.

Believe in your child's natural desire to learn. Show that you think learning is important, enjoyable, and something that you like to be part of. Then, learning will truly be its own reward.

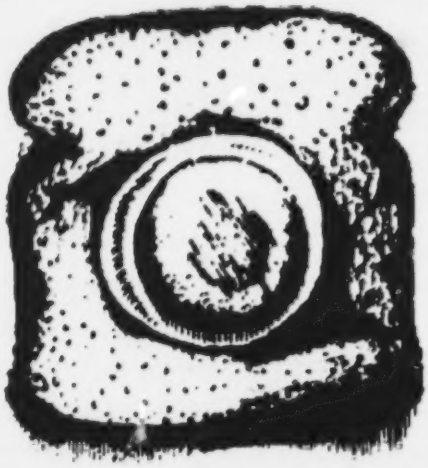
PS 031034

Nest Eggs

Here is a different kind of nest egg for you and your child to make together. You will need a slice of bread and an egg for each person having this breakfast treat.

Put the bread slices on a cutting board or counter where your child can work easily. Let her cut a circle from each slice of bread with a cookie cutter or a small glass. Set the circles aside.

Put butter or margarine in a skillet to melt. Brown one side of the bread, then turn it with a spatula. If your child is ready to work with a hot pan, she can do the turning as you supervise. You can brown the circles now or later for extra bread.



The tricky part is breaking the eggs. You will know whether she is able to learn this now. Break the egg into a measuring cup with a spout. Then she will be able to pour the egg into the cut-out, or nest. Sprinkle on a little salt and pepper, then cover the skillet. Let the nest eggs cook to the degree of doneness that your family members like.

It's hard to get the family together for breakfast, so this could be a weekend breakfast treat.

Celebrate New Skills

Learning how to do new things is something to sing about. Take a few minutes with your child to realize all the things he has learned recently. To the tune of "Mary Had A Little Lamb," sing about some of them. For example:

I have learned to tie my shoes,
Tie my shoes,
Tie my shoes.

I have learned to tie my shoes,
See what I have learned.

A few other possibilities: to tell the time, to pick up toys, to write my name, to use the phone, to zip my coat. The list of things he has learned can go on and on!

rainbow

sun

clouds

yellow star

Tell your child to show you the objects you would not see in the daytime sky.

My Family's Favorite Colors

Here is a good activity to give your child practice in collecting and recording information, sometimes called data. She will also have a chance to talk with others and to analyze results.

She will ask everyone in the family what their favorite color is. (If your family is small, make this a family-and-friends survey.) You might talk together about colors as she prepares for her survey. Colors send messages just as words do. Red, for instance, means **stop** and green means **go** in traffic.

Help her make a chart like this one to record her data. When she has done her chart, ask some questions: Which color did most people choose? How many chose this color? Did anybody choose the same color? If so, what were they?

She could also do a survey of favorite foods or other things she may think of. After this survey is finished, she can draw a picture using everyone's favorite color.

Names (family and friends)	Favorite Color

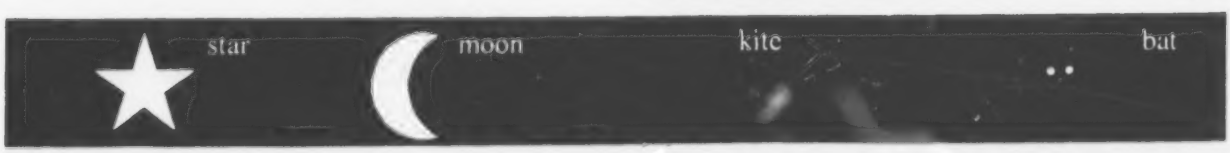
Put Your Child in a Story

You know how important it is to read aloud to your child. It is also fun to **tell** stories. You may think you can't, but if you follow this suggestion, you and your child are in for a treat.

One of the best ways to begin a story is also one of the oldest: **Once upon a time. . . .** The next step will capture your child's interest: **there was a boy (or girl) named**_____ (and here you put **your child's name**). Now you have a good chance for a story he will love.

What happens in the story is whatever occurs to you as you go along. You know what he is interested in, what excites him, what he cares about. It is easier for most storytellers to get out of reality and into pretending. If you get stuck, just ask "What do you think happened next?"

Go ahead. Try it. "Once upon a time, there was a boy named. . ."



Now, ask her to show you things that you would not see in the nighttime sky.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Riding Around Town

Here on the school bus, I'm riding around
picking up friends all over the town—
Jay and Bob and Kaitlyn and Sue,
I wave at them; they wave at me, too.

Jimmy gets on. We're sitting together.
The bus always comes, no matter the weather.
Today it's cloudy. The sidewalks are wet.
But the bus driver came—she never forgets!

I look out the window, and what do I see?
A tall man with boots on, a cat in a tree.
There's my school! My playground! My slide!
I'm very glad that I came for the ride.

Richard Southall

Talk About It

Say, "Tell me in your own words what happened in the poem." Your child's version may be short and simple, but that's all right. Then ask her to tell you what things she remembers seeing on her way to school (or some other place). What things are the same every time? What things are different? (Things that change might be related to weather, seasons, or time of day.)

Picture It

In the boxes below, let your child draw three things the friends in the poem can see out their school bus window. Label one item in each picture.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Thoughts About Early Learning

In recent years, many people seem to want five- and six-year-old children to grow up fast. The result can be expectations that are too high. Some young children believe that they are loved only when they achieve. This is not a good message to give young learners.

Kindergarten should be a time of getting children excited about learning. Your child will be exposed in many different ways to numbers and language. Hands-on-activities, games, stories, and conversation are all important.

Don't be surprised if your child does worksheets as well. Some educators feel that worksheets are not appropriate for young learners. Recent research, though, shows that worksheets can give children good practice as they learn new skills.

All children grow and learn differently. They develop at different rates. They have talents in different areas. When they are not divided into arbitrary age groupings, they have opportunities to flourish individually.

You can do many things at home to help with your child's early learning. This series of learning guides gives you ideas and activities using real-life situations. Many of the activities encourage play; children continue to learn from play well into the early primary grades. These activities and read-aloud selections are to encourage you and your child to have fun with learning.

Children understand through experiences in their own lives. You can give your child such experiences.

PS 03

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

Books to Read with Your Family

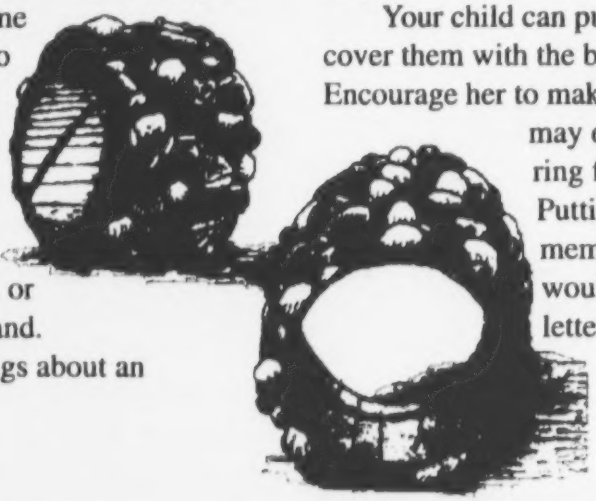
Reading aloud to your child is one way to boost early learning skills. These books are from a list developed by the American Library Association. Some of the titles here will let your family enjoy the rich variety of cultures that make up our world. If you are not able to get to a public library, talk to your child's teacher about borrowing books from the school's media center. Please, do read aloud with your family.

Digging Up Dinosaurs	Aliki
The Very Last First Time	Jan Andrews
Oliver Button Is a Sissy	Tomie DePaola
How My Parents Learned to Eat	Ina R. Friedman
The Purple Coat	Amy Hest
Arrow to the Sun: A Pueblo Indian Tale	Gerald McDermott
Bonjour Lonnie	Faith Ringgold
How Much Is a Million?	David M. Schwartz
One Monday Morning	Uri Shulevitz
Hurricane	David Wiesner

Napkin Rings from Bits of Things

Here is an activity that you and your child can do to make a gift for the whole family. You will need a cardboard tube (a tube from a roll of paper towels or wrapping paper will do very well) and some school glue. You will also need a variety of small, colorful objects: buttons, pieces of broken jewelry, bits of ribbon, inexpensive beads from a yard sale or craft store, or whatever you have on hand.

Cut the tube into rings about an inch wide. Put the different materials in a line of bowls on a work surface—the kitchen table or a counter that your child can use comfortably.



Your child can put glue on the rings and cover them with the beads, buttons, and so on. Encourage her to make different patterns. She may enjoy making a personal ring for each family member. Putting an initial of a family member's name on each one would be good practice in letter skills.

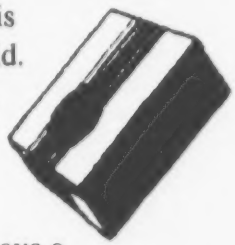
I like to sing and do

Read or sing these words to your child. Ask him to sing the words back to you.

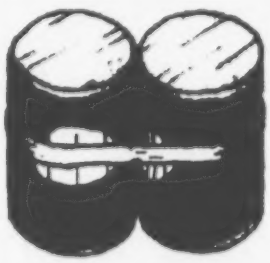
Make a Rhythm Band

It is amazing how many musical instruments you and your child can make from things you have in your house. If you put together several instruments, your family can form a band. Just put a favorite tape in the player, and add your own sounds. Trade instruments every now and then, so everyone can have a chance to play each.

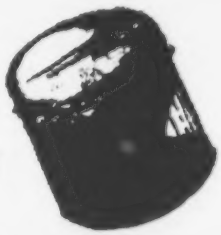
1. **Coffee Fiddle.** Punch a hole in the bottom of a three-pound coffee can. Put a heavy string through the hole and make a knot so the string won't go through the hole. Tie the other end of the thread around a stick or a piece of wood. Pull the string tight. When you pluck it, you get a bass fiddle sound.



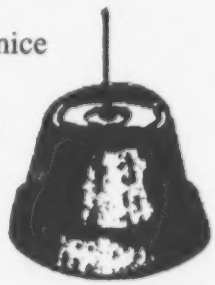
2. **Shoe-Box Banjo.** For this you need a shoe box with lid. Cut a round hole in the lid. Stretch rubber bands of different widths around the box lengthwise. Play it like a banjo. Wider bands have a low sound. Narrow bands sound higher.



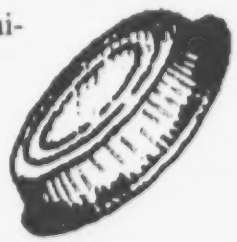
3. **Oatmeal Bongo Drums.** Tape two empty oatmeal boxes together to make bongos. Be sure to tape the lid on, too. Play them with the fingertips. You get a different sound from the tops and the bottoms.



4. **Balloon Drum.** Make a different kind of drum with a large tin can. A coffee can will do. Stretch a balloon over the open end and hold it in place with a rubber band. Use a wooden spoon or the eraser end of an unsharpened pencil as a drum stick.



5. **Clay Bell.** You can make a nice bell sound with a small clay flower pot. Knot a thick string or yarn and thread it through the drain hole in the bottom of the pot. Hold the pot by the top of the string (the pot will be upside down), and strike the pot with a pencil.



6. **Pie Pan Cymbal.** Aluminum pie pans make symbols without your doing a thing to them. Just hold the pan by its edge in one hand and hit the bottom with the other hand. You can also use a pair and hit them against each other.

Your child might invite some friends over and form a marching band. Yes, it would be a good idea to choose a day when the weather is right for outside play.

musical things all day long

He can make up his own tune.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

What Boys and Girls Are Made Of

What are little boys made of?
What are little boys made of?

Of flesh and bones
And muscles and smiles,
And ways to learn
And to grow for miles.

That's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of?
What are little girls made of?

Why, they're made, too,
Of flesh and bones,
And muscles and smiles,
And ways to learn
And to grow for miles.

Boys and girls
Are made to plan
To be whatever
They think they can.

Patricia Penn

A New Word

Ask your child if he knows another word that means the same thing as "skin." If not, tell him you will re-read the first six lines of the poem, and he should raise his right hand when he hears a word he thinks might mean "skin." (The word is *flesh*.) Then read the following words and ask your child to think of another word that means the same thing: *small* (he might say "little"); *huge* (he might say "big" or "giant"); *highway* (he might say "road").

A Plan

What do you want to be when you grow up? Ask your child this question. Most children enjoy thinking and dreaming about growing up. Point out that boys and girls *both* can be what they want. Making a plan can be fun. Explain that a plan is a list of things a person needs to do to make a dream come true. Ask your child to list things to go into her plan. Write down what she says. Her list might include learning to read, going to school, and eating healthful foods. At the top of the list write _____'s Plan. Insert your child's name (or let her do it).

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Dealing with Anger

Does your child know that it is okay to get angry? Anger is a natural emotion that everyone feels sometimes. What your child needs to learn is what to do when she gets mad. Here are some ways that you can help her.

When your child hits someone because she is angry about what has happened—maybe another child took something away from her—be firm but calm. Say, "People are not for hitting. I understand that you are upset, but you cannot hit." This can now become a rule, and you can decide together what the consequences will be for breaking it. Keep rules few and simple. Then you can see that they are enforced.

Solve problems together. "What do you think you might do if this happens again? Remember what the rule is: People are not for hitting." She will have some ideas for solving the problem. "I could hit a punching bag. I could count to 25, the way the man did on TV." Take her ideas seriously. You can see things from her point of view without agreeing that she can do what she wants. Children can be harsh judges; they sometimes think of punishments far more stern than you would!

Set limits that are reasonable. Involve the whole family in making fair rules. Then don't give in when the rules are broken. Children want and need to know that you—adults they love and trust—are in charge.

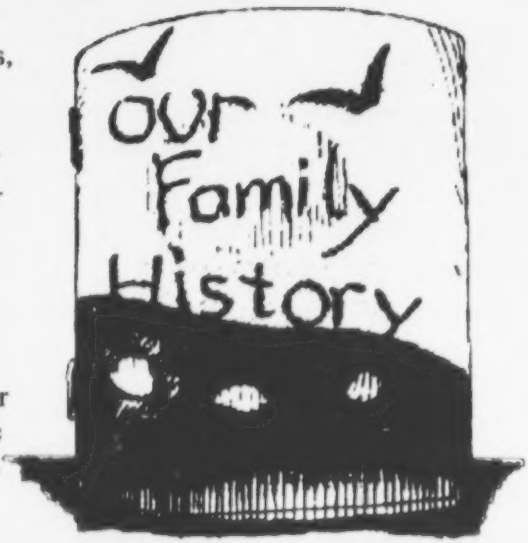
PS 031034

Our Family History

A favorite storytelling subject for most children is family history. If you have a photo album with old pictures, you have a book full of stories. To your young child, pictures of you as a child seem very old!

As you look at old photos, tell stories. It is helpful for children to learn that stories in books can be based on real-life people and events. When you tell stories about family members and things that happened in the past, your child may want to tell stories, too.

Encourage her by giving cues: "Remember when we went to the family reunion? You couldn't believe how much food there was." That gives her the beginning for her own story. Family stories make good books. She can make her own with folded paper stapled on one side. Or you can buy an inexpensive notebook and let her decorate the cover.

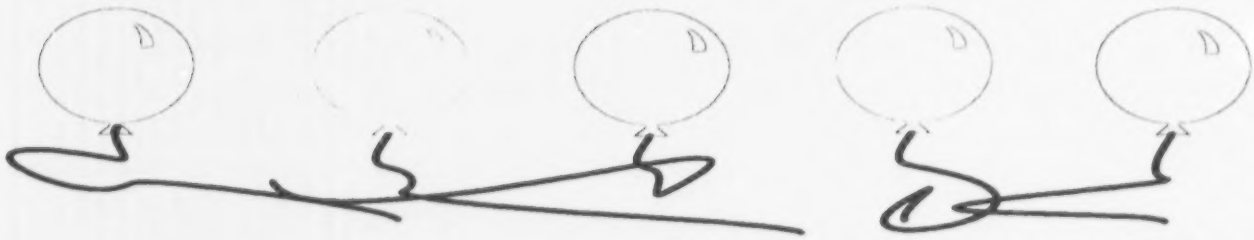


Zipping Things Up

Your child might have fun thinking about how clothes and other things are fastened. Everybody has to struggle with a zipper sometimes. Ask your child:

- How many things can you think of that have zippers? Help him make a list.
- How did people fasten things before zippers were invented? (You may be interested to know that a patent for the zipper was issued on April 29, 1913.)
- What fastener is newer than a zipper? (The answer to that question is "velcro.")
- How many things can you think of that fasten with velcro? (So many shoes have velcro fasteners instead of laces that some children learn late how to tie their shoes!)

Isn't it fun to do mental exercises with your child? Now, do something physical together.

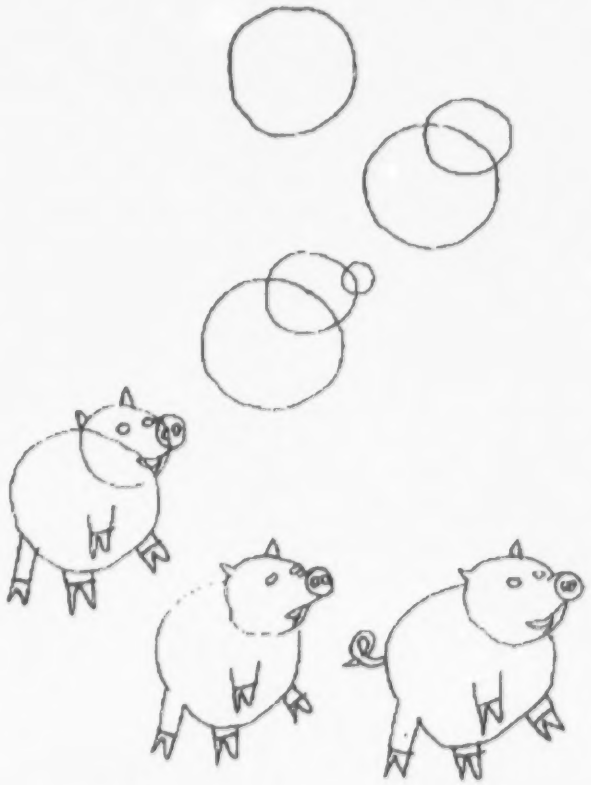


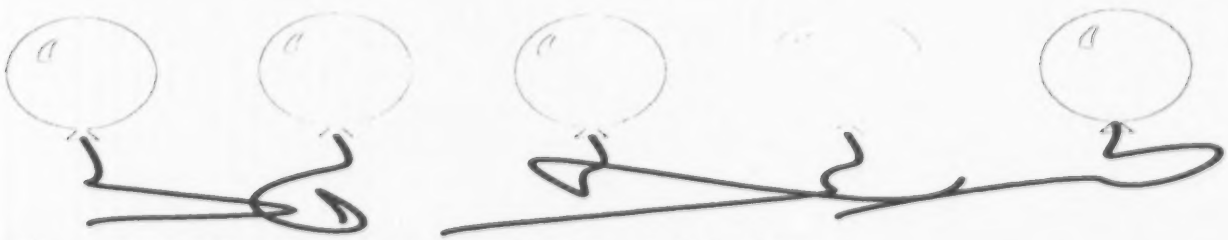
Tell your child to print his or her name,

You Can Draw a Pig

Dear Parent:
Your child can learn so much more doing an original drawing than he can by tracing, or coloring in a coloring book. His circles in this activity probably won't be perfectly round, but that doesn't matter. This is also a read-aloud. Read it together, then give him some paper and a pencil or crayons. He will probably keep drawing after he does a pig or two.

It isn't so hard to draw a pig.
If you can draw a circle,
You can draw a pig.
First, a big circle for a plump pig
With a small circle for the head
And a smaller circle for the snout.
(That's pig talk for nose.)
That doesn't look like a pig, you say.
Wait. . .
Add nostrils
And ears
And eyes
And legs.
Now it's a pig.
No, not quite.
This pig needs a curly tail.
Now, you draw one.





with one letter in each ballon. Start with a capital letter.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Under My Umbrella

The rain goes "plop"
But not a drop
Gets under my umbrella.

I splash on the path
Like I'm taking a bath
All dressed up in yellow.

There's a smile on my face.
It's my own special place—
Under my umbrella.

Carla Thomas McClure

Finger Piggyback

Tell your child, "Now that you are getting too grown-up to ride around on people's backs, I'm going to let you ride piggyback on my reading finger." Have your child sit to your left. Using your "pointing finger," point to each word as you read the poem aloud. Have your child put her right pointing finger on top of yours. Stop (point) only once on each word. Do this when you read other stories, too.

Rhyme Time

Explain that rhymes are words that sound alike. For example, *frog* rhymes with *log*. Below are some sets of three words. Read one set aloud, pointing to each word as you say it, then ask your child which word does not rhyme with the other two. Do this for each set of words. You could also read a favorite rhyming story. A good one is *Hop on Pop* by Dr. Seuss.

rain	mile	under	pup	walk
pain	smile	drop	splash	talk
yellow	face	thunder	up	weather

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FAMILY Connections

K-1

For the family of _____

Time Is a Valuable Gift

You have probably heard that children do better in school, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to succeed as adults when their parents are involved in their education. It's true. Fortunately, most parents want to do whatever they can to help their children learn.

But it isn't always easy to figure out the best way to help. Some parents buy educational toys. Some spend a lot of money on computer programs. Some use worksheets and flash cards. Some send their children to after-school lessons in everything: swimming, dancing, gymnastics, piano. . . . The list can go on and on.

Sometimes what is hardest to give is time. All the lessons and educational toys in the world will not be as valuable to your child as the gift that only you can give—your time. Time to listen to her concerns, time to let her know that you are interested, time to read to her and let her read to you, time to tell stories, time to walk in the woods or the park. Time that you spend with your young learner is the greatest parent involvement activity of all.

In short, you can give *things* or you can give *time*. Time is better.

PS 031034

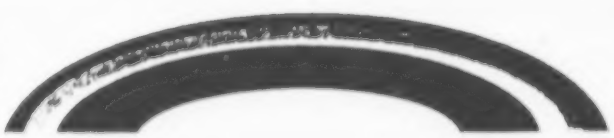
Freezer Banana

What do you do with bananas if they start to get too ripe? You can bake banana bread, but you may not have time to do that. Here's an idea your child will enjoy.

You will need plastic wrap. Have your child tear off as many pieces of wrap as you will need. Each piece should be large enough to wrap half a banana. She can lay out each piece on a flat surface such as a cutting board or the kitchen counter.

Now she can peel the bananas, cut them in half, and wrap the halves in plastic. Put them in the freezer for a delicious snack. You don't need sticks for the bananas. When she's ready for one of the frozen treats, she can just peel back the plastic wrap and use it as a holder. This snack is tastier and healthier than most store-bought frozen treats.

A Sunshine Gram



If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Good Guess = Estimate

Have you ever thought about how many times a day you estimate? Many people do it when they shop for groceries to be sure they stay within their budget. You may estimate how much time you have to finish a task before the kids get out of school. You may estimate how much it will cost for car repairs.

Estimation is a useful skill. Children have a lot of fun practicing it. It is another way to help them learn to enjoy math. Here is just one simple activity to do with your child.

Ask him how many windows he thinks are in the house. Give him time to think about it. Assure him there is no pressure for a right answer. Then go through the house together and count the windows.

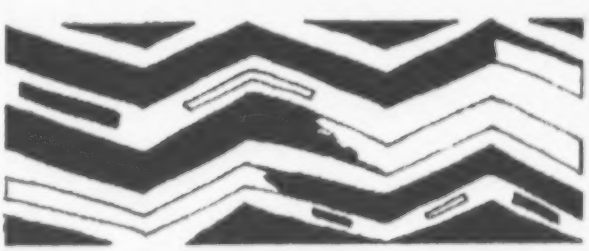
Other things that are fun to estimate: (1) How long a piece of string will he need to go around his waist? His wrist? (2) How many times does he chew each mouthful of food? You can easily see how close his estimate is.

When children see the connection between their everyday lives and math, they are more apt to be comfortable with the subject in school. Together, think of other ways to practice estimating.

Tire Art

You probably don't think of tires as art, so you are in for a surprise. You and your child can have an artful experience with some crayons and thin paper. (If you save gift boxes, you might find tissue paper in them that will be ideal for this activity.) Old crayons that don't have points anymore are good to use for rubbing, which is the name of this art form.

Place a piece of paper over a tire and rub the crayon gently back and forth. A pattern appears in a wonderful way. Bicycle tires, tricycle tires, and automobile tires all make interesting patterns.



Your child will find other rough or bumpy surfaces that are good for rubbings: brick walls, tree bark, sidewalks, and leaves are just a few examples.

Ask your child to tell you how many pieces are missing from each pizza.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Families

We all belong to a family,
Of one kind or another.
Some are big and some are small.
They love and help each other.

Some have a mommy and daddy.
Some may have only one.
Some have sisters and brothers,
And some, perhaps, have none.

Some have grandmas and grandpas,
Uncles and aunties, as well.
Some may have 29 cousins.
Now, wouldn't that be swell?

No matter how big a family is,
A dozen or seven or two,
They need one another in special ways,
And so does yours need you!

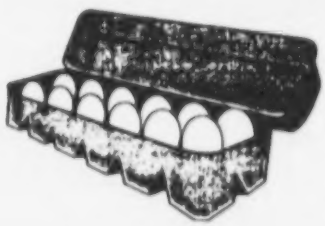
Ron Diss

Family Album

Have you sat down with your child to look at family photos lately? Children love to look at pictures of themselves and family members. It gives you a chance to share family stories and to introduce relatives your child has never met. You can talk about family names and show him how to write them. Seeing that they are part of a family can help children feel safe and secure. Give your full attention to your child's questions and comments during the precious time you spend together.

I Spy a Dozen!

Explain to your child that the word *dozen* means 12. Use cards, coins, or other objects to show her how to count to 12. The next time you go to the grocery store together, say, "Today, let's look for things that come in sets of 12." Tell your child to say, "I spy a dozen" every time one of you points to something that includes 12 items, such as a carton of eggs, a package of doughnuts, frozen treats, or roses.



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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

To Show Good Manners, Be Kind

We used to give a lot of attention to what was called etiquette, or good manners. At some point, people started to think that many rules seemed silly, or artificial. Why should we worry about teaching our children how to introduce people to one another? What difference could it make whether children used titles like "Mr." or "Ms." when they spoke to adults?

It seems we have forgotten what having good manners is really about. Maybe the rules of etiquette got in the way of the purpose: being kind to one another. Saying "please" and "thank you" eases the hard corners of life.

Learning good manners has other rewards, of course. Just one example is listening, a very important social skill. Not only is it impolite to talk when someone else is talking, it also gets in the way of learning. Children need to become good listeners. (So do parents!)

The best way to teach good manners is by example. It also helps to praise your child for following the rules: "Thank you for not talking while I was on the phone. Now I'm free to help you with the puzzle." Treat children with the same kindness and respect that you show your adult friends. As always, you will get better results by praising for success than you will by punishing for failure.

Knowing how to behave in ways that are expected and accepted has other benefits for children. The approval that comes from doing the right thing builds confidence. Knowing how to behave makes a child feel competent. Self-esteem thrives on competence and confidence.

PS 031034

Am I Like You?

Here is an activity your child will enjoy doing that will encourage him to think about comparing. You can use the chart provided here or make a chart for the family, including as many members as you wish. If your youngster enjoys doing this, he might want you to help him make a chart to use with some friends, too.

Fill in the chart together. Consider these questions: How are we alike? In what ways are we different? If you have a chart with several people on it, ask your child to see if there is one thing that everyone has in common.

	Me	Mom	Dad
birthday			
height			
eye color			
hair color			
right/left handed			

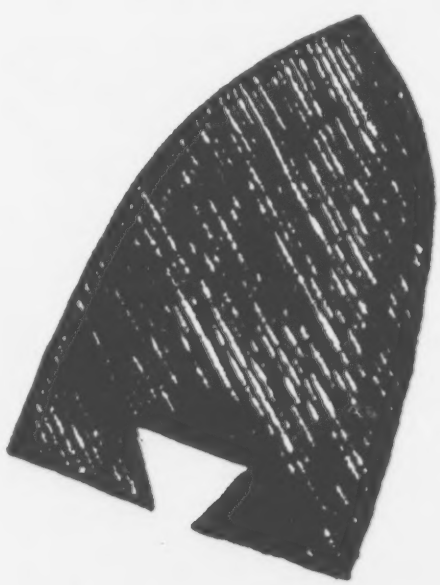
Detergent Power

No, this is not a TV commercial. It is an activity that will help you get your child excited about science. And since she gets to play in water, you know it will be fun. Let her do as much of the preparation as she can.

You will need some light cardboard to make a boat. Index cards will work, or you can use an old manila file folder. Cut out the shape to the right, making the boat about 2 1/2 inches long and 1 1/2 inches wide at the wide end. Cut out several; she will want to do this more than once.

1. Cut out a boat.
2. Fill the sink or dish pan with water.
3. Put the boat gently on the water.
4. Pour a drop or two of liquid detergent into the notch of the boat.

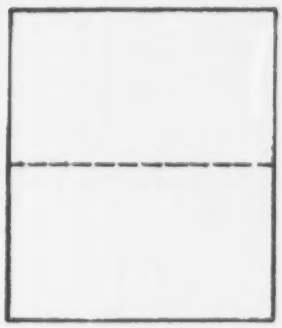
Your child will be delighted to see the boat speed across the water. If she asks how it happens, you can explain that the soap "breaks up" the water inside the notch and pushes the boat forward. (The scientific term for this is "surface tension.") Wipe out the sink and put in fresh water before you try the experiment again. It won't work if the water has any detergent in it.



The Paper Stretch

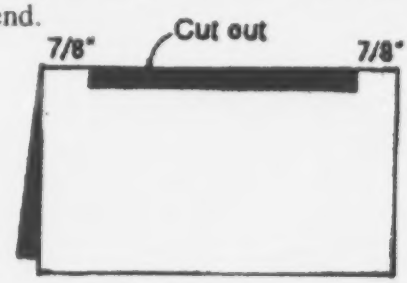
You probably won't believe you can cut a piece of typing paper so that you can step through it without tearing it. Your child will love showing this amazing thing to friends and family.

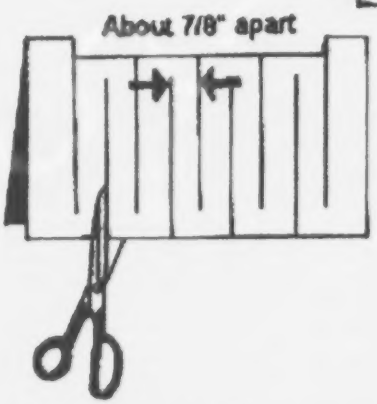
To do this mysterious trick, you will need a sheet of paper 8 1/2 by 11 inches, scissors, and a pencil. The measurements don't have to be exact, and the cutting can be rough. Safety scissors will work just fine. If you follow these steps, you and your child will be able to step through the piece of paper.



1. Fold the paper in half across.

2. Cut out a 1/2-inch deep box along the fold, starting about an inch from each end.





3. Make nine cuts roughly an equal distance apart, alternating with one cut starting at the fold and the other starting at the bottom. Be careful not to cut through the fold.

4. Unfold the paper and stretch it out. Now you can step through it.

This activity is adapted from one in the book *Simple Science Experiments with Everyday Materials.*

> If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
> If children live with encouragement, they learn to be confident.
> —*Dorothy Law Nolte*

Ask your child to draw a circle around things that rhyme with *log*.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

I Like Different Weather

What makes the sun
stay up in the sky?
It looks down at me
like a big lemon pie.

Why does the wind
brush my skin when it blows?
It's warm in the summer
but in winter it snows.

How does the rain
know when to come?
It thumps on my rooftop
and blocks out the sun.

I like different weather,
and here are the reasons—
It brings me surprises
and gives me the seasons.

Carla Thomas McClure

Weather Words

Ask your child to help you think of some words people use when they talk about the weather (cloudy, rainy, hot). Write the words on a piece of paper and tape the paper to a bookshelf or wall, low enough for your child to see. Listen for new weather words on television and radio news reports. Look up the day's forecast in the newspaper. When one of you hears or sees a new word, help your child understand what it means. Then add it to the list.

Picture-Perfect Days

Make a calendar page that shows a whole month on one page (or use your wall calendar, if you already have one). Each evening, circle the day's date and ask your child to draw a picture in the space to show what the weather was like that day. He might draw clouds, raindrops, the sun, or something else. Somewhere in the calendar block for each day, write a weather word that matches the drawing. Underline the first letter of the weather word.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Help Your Child Learn to Plan

We could say the same thing about planning that is said about the weather: everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it. We know that it is important to plan, but most of us were not taught how to do it.

Children can learn to think ahead. You can help your child by watching for opportunities to practice planning. For example, when you're going to the library, plan the trip. Help your child put the necessary steps in order. They might go something like this:

- First, wash your hands and comb your hair.
- Second, get the books we need to return.
- Third, be sure you have your library card.

What comes first and what comes next are important in learning to solve problems. Ask questions to help him think about other things he might need to do to be ready. "Do we need to make a list of books that you want to look for? Shall we take along this publication's most recent book list? Did you remember something you want to look up while we're at the library?"

You will probably think of many other chances to plan. If you are getting ready for a trip, planning is a big part of the enjoyment. As you can see from just one example, lots of other learning opportunities pop up when you are planning. But don't make it into serious business; just enjoy this time together with your child.

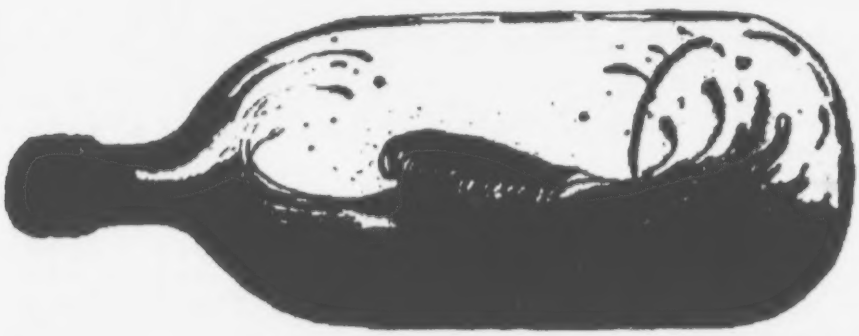
PS 031034

Bottle a Little Ocean

You know that oil and water don't mix. Because they don't, you can create an ocean in a bottle. The toy you and your child can make together may lead to a science project when the child is older. Meanwhile, it's another chance to show your child how science is all around us, all the time.

You will need a small, clear plastic bottle with a screw cap. A 16-ounce soft drink bottle will be fine. Let your child do as much of the work as she can. Fill the bottle two-thirds full with water. Add a few drops of blue food color, or whatever color you want your ocean to be. Add some baby oil or cooking oil. The bottle should be almost full. Put the cap on and tighten it. It's a good idea to tape or glue the top as well. This is not a mixture you want to spill on the couch!

Your child will enjoy rocking the bottle back and forth to create what looks like ocean waves. She might ask questions you can't answer, but you can help her find answers. And she will begin to see science is interesting and exciting, not something to dread.



An Important Message

All children are born to grow, to develop, to live, to love, and to articulate their needs and feelings. For their development, children need the respect and protection of adults who take them seriously, love them, and honestly help them to become oriented in the world.

—Alice Miller

Have your child point to the things

Good Junk Creations

Given a box of junk, your child can construct a thing of beauty. Bolts, screws, buttons, golf tees, and wood scraps are just a few of the things that might be in the box. Or, she might choose to make something that has a useful purpose. (That could also be lovely.) Good junk can make a beautiful piece of sculpture.

Be sure to provide string, pipe cleaners, tape, and other aids to create your junk art.

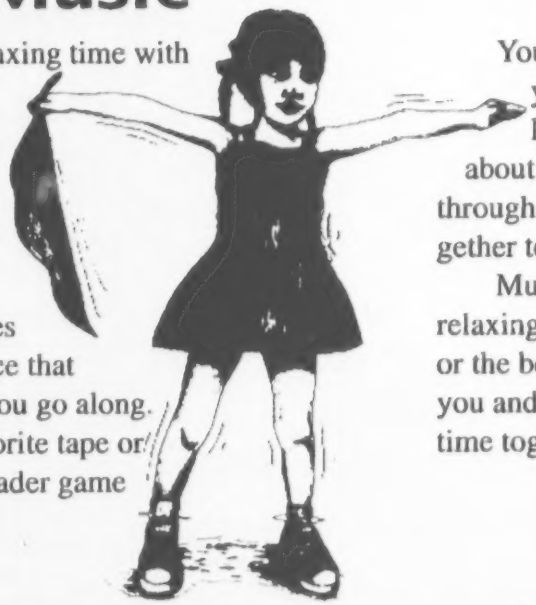
The point is to give your child a chance to look at things in different ways. Part of problem solving is going beyond the usual.

Move to Music

One way to spend relaxing time with your child is moving to music. There are many ways to do it, and none take much preparation.

You can just stop whatever you are doing when a favorite song comes on the radio, and do a dance that you make up together as you go along.

You can choose a favorite tape or CD and do a follow-the-leader game to music.



You can each take a scarf or, if you happen to have some, a long piece of crepe paper about two inches wide. Wave it through the air as you move together to the rhythm of the music.

Music can be energizing or relaxing, depending on the melody or the beat. Whatever you choose, you and your child can have a good time together moving to music.

that do not belong on the clotheslines.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Poison Ivy

Mom told me not to do it
But I did it anyway—
I got in poison ivy
when I went outside to play.

Dad told me not to scratch it
when my skin began to itch.
It got all red and bumpy
And it made me want to twitch.

Next time, I think I'll listen.
They won't have to tell me twice.
I've learned a painful lesson—
Poison ivy isn't nice!

Carla Thomas McClure

What Happened First?

After you read the poem, ask your child which of these events happened first:

- Mom said not to play in poison ivy, or Dad said not to scratch?
- The girl played in poison ivy, or the girl's skin got red and itchy?
- The girl said she had learned a painful lesson, or she went outside to play?

Stay Away from This!

Ask, "Why do you think the little girl in this picture says poison ivy isn't nice?" Explain that its leaves can make the skin itch and turn red. Ask your child to name some other things people should stay away from when they are outside. Some answers might include wild animals, broken glass, and busy streets.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

TV Can Be Scary

When children see television news—and other shows, as well—they sometimes see things that scare them. Scenes showing people who are hurt, or children who are starving, are even more horrifying to children than to adults.

If children become frightened, talk with them about what they have seen. Don't ignore or make light of what they say. It doesn't help to say such things as "It's not real" or "It's silly to be scared" or "Don't be such a baby."

Reassure them. Tell them that you are there to keep them safe, and that you will watch over them. But don't over-promise: "Nothing like that will ever happen to you. I won't let it." Listen to what they say, and treat it with respect.

Many children take comfort from feeling in control. "When I grow up I won't let people starve. I won't let people hurt each other." Encourage your children's belief that they can affect their own lives and those of other people by the choices they make.

Above all, help them to understand that bad things don't happen because of something "bad" they did or wished for.

FOCUS ST

See How I Grow

Your child will enjoy keeping a growth chart to show he is getting taller. You can make marks on a door frame, or you can make a paper chart that can be removed. Either way, the record becomes a special kind of family history.

To arouse his interest, make the first mark at his birth length. Kids like to hear about their size as babies. You can talk about how much he can do now that he could not do as an infant; for one, he could not stand up to be measured! He will also be interested to know that if he had kept growing as fast as he did when he was a baby, he would be 35 feet tall by age 16.

He may be learning at school to use the metric system. You can keep your chart in either metric (centimeters and meters) or English (feet and inches) measurements. It would be fun to learn the differences in his height in inches and centimeters. You might do some other measurements, too: head size, length of foot, and so on.

This is another example of numbers in everyday life.

More Riddles

What do you call a skeleton who won't get out of bed?

Lazy Bones.

Why shouldn't you tell a secret to a pig?

He might squeal.

pail

snail

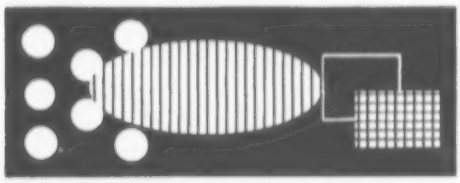
nail

bed

whale

As you name and touch each picture, ask your child to circle the things that rhyme with *mail*.

Pound a Pattern



Here's an enjoyable way for your child to develop her eye-hand coordination. Give her a hammer, some big-headed nails, and a piece of wood. Be sure to talk about how to be a safe pounder before she begins to work. Show her how to hold the hammer and how to get the nail started. You may want to pound the first nail for her.

Have her pound the nails into any arrangement she wants. When the nails are placed to her satisfaction, give her some yarn or twine to wrap her pattern.

A variation on the activity can give her practice in copying patterns, which is an important pre-math skill. You make a pattern on the wood block and have her copy it.

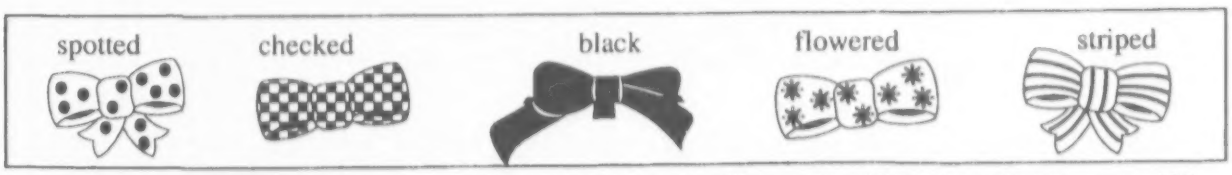
Now play with some numbers using the nails. Ask: "How many nails did you use in your pattern? How many nails are above the bottom nail? How many are on the right side of the board?" You can make up questions that fit her pattern. Or just count all the nails.

Fun Dough

If you haven't had a chance to work with your hands for a while, join your child in a game of **Fun Dough.** It's quick and easy to make, and it will bring out the artist in both of you.

Mix together 1 cup plain flour, 1/2 cup salt, and 1/2 cup water. If you have some, add a few drops of food color. Let your child do the measuring and mixing. You can divide the dough before adding food color if you want more than one color of dough.

Now have fun shaping the dough into anything that you like. This activity is good for developing and coordinating large muscles.



Ask your child, "Which bow is solid black? checked? spotted? striped? flowered?"

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Ten Friends for Tea

I asked Ken and Kendra over to play;
I thought they might like to have tea.
But when they knocked at my front door,
They brought a whole party for me!

Ginger came with ginger snaps;
Chip had chocolates in a sack;
Mack made macaroni and cheese;
And Jill brought crackers to snack.

Alberto came with apples,
And Patty made a pie.
Serena came with ten fish sticks
For my Aunt Sara to fry.

I loved all the goodies to nibble.
But what was the best thing to me,
Was Fred coming in with his fiddle
So we could have music with tea!

Sara Jennings

adapted from "Ten Friends for Toast" by Patricia Penn

Five Senses

Explain to your child that everybody has five senses to help them learn about the world and stay safe. The five senses are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Talk about each sense, one at a time. Then ask your child to name sounds, smells, and tastes mentioned in the poem. Then ask, "Which do you think would *not* feel good—picking up an apple, or putting your hand in a cup of hot tea?"

Ten Fish Sticks for Ten Friends

Circle the names of the 10 friends in the poem who came for tea. Let your child count as you point to each name. Ask, "How many fish sticks will each friend get if Aunt Sara doesn't want one?"

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Choose Words Carefully

One way to help children learn that both boys and girls can do all kinds of work is to use titles that don't limit jobs to one gender. Here are some examples:

Instead of fireman, say firefighter.
Instead of workman, say worker.
Instead of policeman, say police officer.
Instead of mailman, say mail carrier.

Doctor, lawyer, architect, and many other job titles can be used for both men and women. Yet some people still put "lady" or "woman" in front of those titles. Or they call a man who works as a nurse a "male nurse." This kind of language can give children the wrong idea. It makes them think that men and women with the same jobs do different kinds of work, which is not true.

That is one reason that so-called feminine word endings such as "ess" and "ette" are used less and less these days. For example, it used to be that flight attendants were called *stewards* or *stewardesses.* Today, they are simply called *flight attendants.*

It's easy for children to get the mistaken idea that some jobs are for men and other jobs are for women. One little girl whose mother was a lawyer heard a friend say his father was a lawyer. She said, "Daddies can't be lawyers. Mommies are lawyers." Not so long ago, the example would have been the other way around.

Children should be confident that they can do any work they choose if they prepare themselves. They should not feel limited by their gender. Help by teaching them the right words.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031054

Weighing In

If you have a bathroom scale, you have a perfect tool for helping your child learn about measurement. You may be keeping a height chart. Talk with your child about weight, which is another kind of measurement.

Have him stand on the scale to be weighed. Show him and tell him how much he weighs. Ask him if someone smaller than he is could weigh more or less than he does. This may seem a very easy question. But the concept of weight is harder to understand than the concept of height.

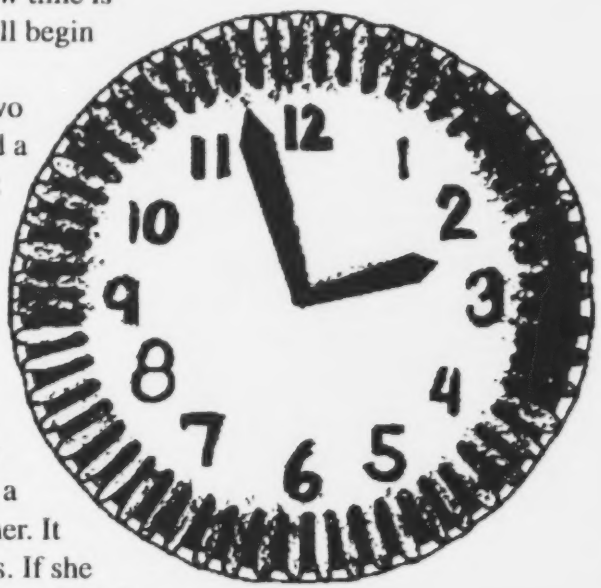
Your child will be interested is comparing weights of objects. If he picks up several different objects he will notice that some are heavier and some are lighter. He will notice that some large objects are not as heavy as some smaller ones. Suggest that he pick up a pillow from his bed, for example, and then a can of tomato juice, or a small bag of sugar.

A Sunshine Gram

If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Measuring Time

Another thing that your child will learn to measure is time. Making a simple clock with her will help you show her how time is measured. As she moves the clock hands, she will begin to understand why we talk about time passing.



You will need a paper or styrofoam plate, two strips of heavy paper to cut into clock hands, and a brad to fasten the hands to the plate. If you don't have a brad, use a thumb tack and a small piece of wood. Your child may want to put the clock numbers on the plate to make the face. She could use crayons to make the clock colorful. Explain to her why the hands go around the clock twice a day.

You probably tell time at your house mostly with digital clocks. Show her how time looks on a digital clock and the clock you have made together. It isn't important to explain how either clock works. If she has a lot of questions, look for answers together if you don't know them.

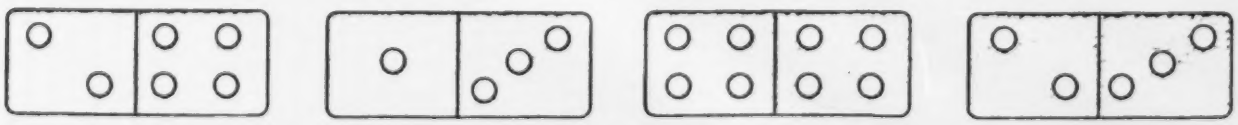
What Happens When

Use the paper clock to help your youngster understand the importance of time in everyday life. Ask him to think about some things he does every day:

Get up at what time? ——— 7:00
Eat breakfast at what time? ——— 7:45
Go to school at what time? ——— 8:15
Eat lunch at what time? ——— 12:00

Have him move the clock hands to show the time on his clock. Help him think of more examples to practice setting his clock.

Another thing he can do to learn time measurement—look around the house to count as many different time measurers as he can find. Some possibilities are alarm clock, clock radio, wrist watch, stove clock, and VCR/DVD clock. How many are digital?



Ask your child to tell you how many dots are on each domino.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

A Dark and Stormy Nighttime

Lightning flashes!
Thunder cracks!
The lights go out,
And then come back!

From in my bed
I peek to see . . .
Is that a monster
Looking at me?

No, all seems fine,
Except the clock.
It blinks and blinks
But tells me . . .
not.

adapted from "New-Fashioned Time" by Patricia Penn

Set the Clock

If you have a digital clock, ask your child to watch what happens when you unplug the electrical cord, then plug it back in. Most clocks flash "12:00" when you do this. Explain that the clock "blinks" anytime the power goes off and on. Show your child how to reset the clock so that it shows the correct time.

Act It Out

Your child will enjoy doing these actions to go with the poem as you read it at bedtime:

Lightning flashes! (open eyes wide)
Thunder cracks! (roar like thunder)
The lights go out, (turn off overhead light)
And then come back! (turn on night light)

From in my bed (get in bed, under covers)
I peek to see . . .(raise covers, look out)
Is that a monster (make a scary face)
Looking at me? (squint eyes)

No, all seems fine (shake head "no")
Except the clock (point to clock)
It blinks and blinks (blink eyes)
And tells me . . . not. (shrug shoulders)

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Have a Genuine Encounter

A psychologist at a child development center said he is often struck by how many children never have a real or genuine encounter with a parent or other person who cares for them. What is a genuine encounter?

For a certain length of time each day, your child gets 100 percent of your attention. It doesn't have to be a very long time—just 10 minutes would be wonderful. For that 10 minutes, nothing is allowed to intrude. This is special, personal time. Even a six-year-old child sometimes might like to hold hands or sit on your lap.

You might whisper secrets, or talk about something that was special about the day. Encourage your child to say anything that comes to mind. Ask to see a drawing, or something that he has written. To have a genuine encounter, the parent must be all ears.

Watching TV together or going to the movies can be good fun, but these things don't count as genuine encounters. A genuine encounter requires giving your child your full attention, with no distractions.

"It is amazing to me how starved many children are for such an interaction, and how some children never experience 100 percent of a parent for some time," the psychologist said.

"Parents are often surprised when their children get into their teen years and don't talk to parents. They have never had a chance to learn how," he said.

Make genuine encounters with your child a regular part of your daily life.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

ESTEEM

Name That Coin

Children love to look at coins but sometimes they can't identify the coins or tell you their value. For this activity, you will need one of each: penny, nickel, dime, quarter.

First, look at the coins and talk about what color they are, the pictures on them, and what they are worth. Put a penny, nickel, and dime on the floor or table. Tell your child that you are thinking of a coin. Give your child hints to figure out which coin you are thinking of. For example, "My coin has a man on one side, a building on the other." Let your child look at the coins as you talk. Ask, "Can you make a guess?" Give another clue: " My coin is silver." Keep giving clues until your child guesses the coin.

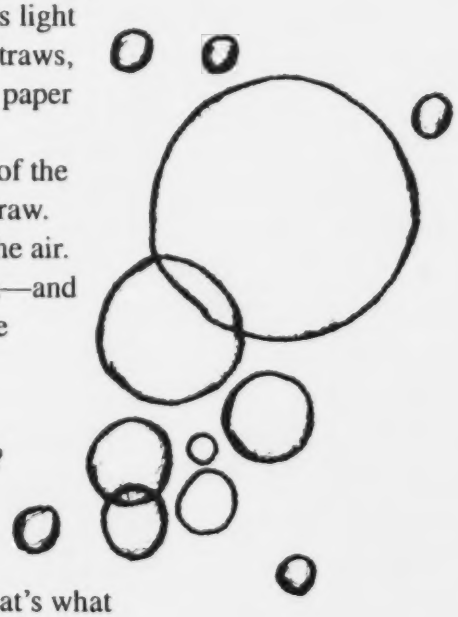
Next, add a quarter to the coins on the table and continue the game. Have your child give you clues for you to guess the coin. This guessing game helps young children learn to recognize coins and develop problem-solving and thinking skills.

Some other time, let your child look at the different pictures on the backs of state quarters. Help him see that the quarters are all the same size and have the same value.

Forever Blowing Bubbles

You can make bubble-blowing solution by adding 1/3 cup dishwashing liquid to 1 cup water. Add two tablespoons light corn syrup. Collect some bubble-blowing equipment: straws, small cans with both ends removed, shapes made from paper clips, plastic berry boxes, and a plastic fly swatter.

To make bubbles, dip the tip of a straw in and out of the bubble mix, then blow gently on the other end of the straw. For the other objects, just dip them and wave them in the air. Creating bubbles is a delightful experience for children—and many adults. It is also a way to make discoveries. Some questions to ask:



- How large can you make your bubbles?
- What might you do to make them even larger?
- Can you make them last longer?
- How can you change their shape?

The answers come from trying different things. That's what science is about.

Name Some Tunes

This is a good game that can be played by a family of two or more. Take turns coming up with songs that others in the game guess in as few notes as possible. You can hum the tunes—or sing them if the words don't give away the name of the song.

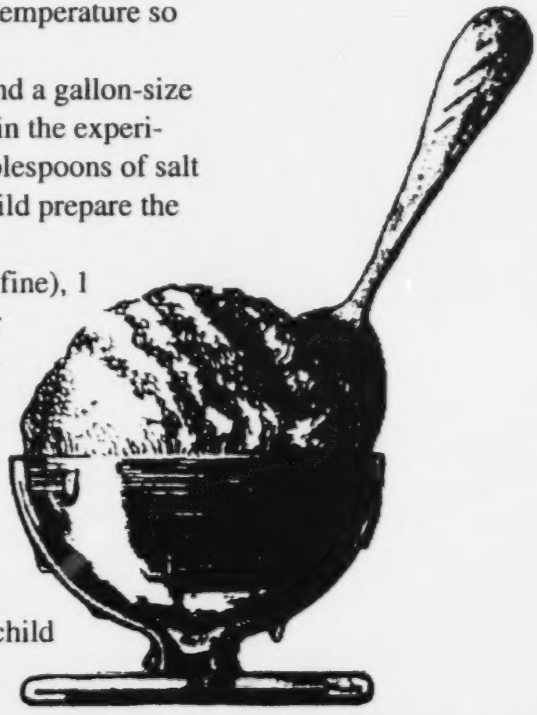
Start with three or four notes and add notes as players continue guessing. Use songs that most players are apt to know. Include theme songs from television programs—commercials, too—as well as tunes from movies and Top-40 songs.

You can keep score if everyone wants to. If you do, make the prize a gift of time to each other. It's fun to play without keeping score, too.

Ice Cream in a Bag

Here is a science experiment that your child can eat. Your child will learn that adding salt to ice lowers its freezing temperature so you get ice cream sooner.

You will need a pint-size zip-lock plastic bag and a gallon-size zip-lock plastic bag for each child who participates in the experiment. Fill the larger bag half full with ice. Add 6 tablespoons of salt and seal the bag to let it chill while you and your child prepare the smaller bag.



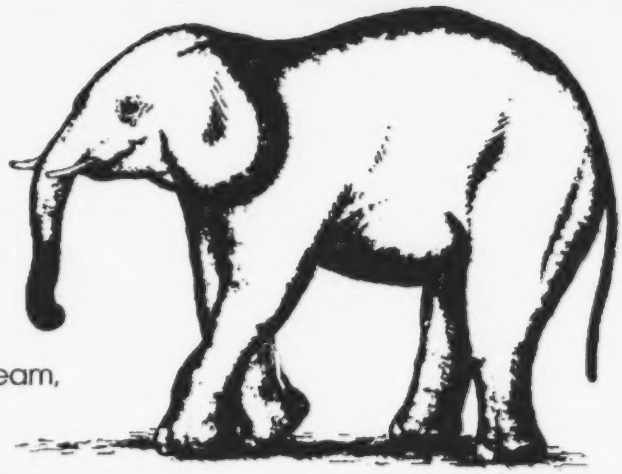
In the small bag put 1/2 cup of milk (low-fat is fine), 1 tablespoon sugar, and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla. Let your child do the measuring; it's good practice for beginning to understand fractions. Seal the small bag. Open the large bag and put the small one in. Reseal the large bag.

Have your child shake the bag until the mixture in the small bag becomes ice cream—about five minutes. You may need to wrap the bag in a towel or newspaper if it gets too cold to hold. Your child can eat the ice cream from the bag. Be sure to wipe it off so no salt gets into the ice cream.

Teach your child what these signs mean. Look for them the next time you go out.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

The Elephant



If you had a pet elephant,
What in the world would you do?
He couldn't live with you in your house,
Unless you lived in a zoo.

If he came to your birthday party,
I wonder what games he could play?
And when it was time for cake and ice cream,
You'd have to have peanuts and hay!

Ron Diss

Peanuts

Some children have never seen peanuts that are still in the shell. If your child is not allergic to peanuts, buy some the next time you visit the grocery store. Then show him how to break the shells open with his fingers and enjoy an "elephant snack" together. Here are three fun facts you can share:

- Peanuts don't grow on trees. They grow under the ground.
- Elephants eat the shells along with the peanuts!
- Elephants like to eat oranges and tree bark better than peanuts.

The Memory of an Elephant

Explain to your child that when people say you have the memory of an elephant, they mean you are good at remembering things. Tell your child that you are going to play a memory game. Read the first verse of *The Elephant* two times in a row. The second time you read it, pause when you come to the words "elephant" and "zoo" to see if your child can fill in the blank. Try the same thing with the second verse, pausing when you come to the words "play" and "hay."

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Questions Can Be Powerful

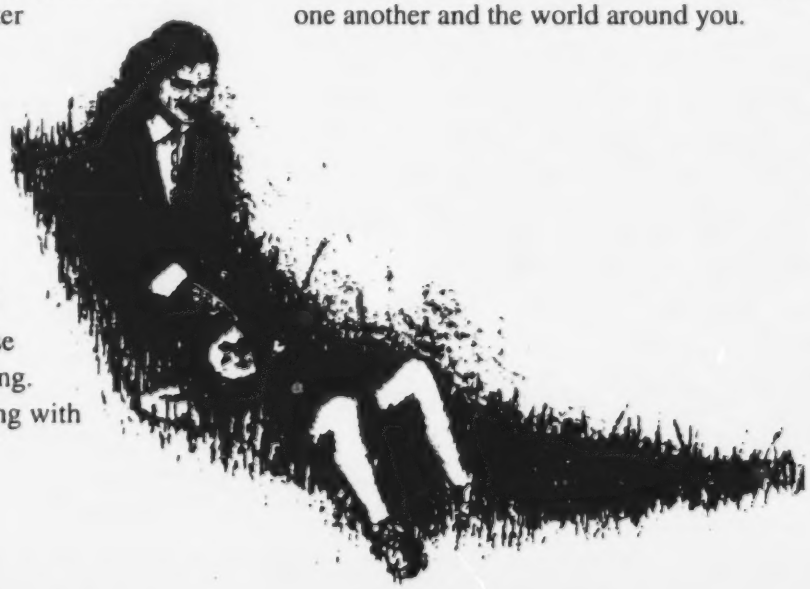
An interviewer asked a Nobel Prize scientist how he became interested in his chosen field. "Every day when I got home from school," the scientist responded, "my mother said to me: 'Did you ask a good question today?' "

Just think of that. What a powerful influence you can be on your child's life, just by encouraging questions. Most of us as parents are more apt to ask our children whether they got the right answers. We do that because we want to be sure they are learning. Making questions as important as answers is a better way to do it.

You may wonder why you should want him to ask more questions. It seems he is already asking hundreds every day. But the way you respond is important. Be as patient as you can. If you tell him not to bother you, because you're busy, he will stop asking. Then his surest path to learning with you will be closed.

Children ask hard questions like "Why is the sky blue?" You don't have to give a scientifically correct answer. Not many people could! You can say that you don't know, then suggest going to the library to read about the sky together. What your child might be wondering is why blue and not purple. You could get into a great discussion about how many different colors the sky can be. You could end up talking about the weather.

See where a question can lead? Let questions lead you and your child to know more about one another and the world around you.



PS 031034

Interview an Elder

It is not too soon to arouse your child's interest in history. One excellent way to begin is to have her interview a grandparent or other older friend or relative. Family history is fascinating to children.

Your child will like the idea of being the interviewer. You can have a good time with her as she prepares the questions she wants to ask. She will be able to think of many once you get her started. Suggest something like: "What television programs were popular when you were a little boy, Grandpa?"

If your children are lucky enough to have great grandparents they can talk to, even more interesting subjects may arise. As an interview goes on, persons being interviewed are likely to bring out photographs and other items to illustrate their memories.

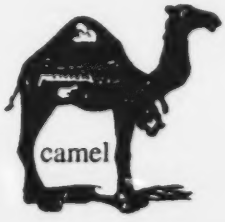
One way to have a record of the interview is to use a tape recorder. Your child can then share her experience with others in the family and with friends. She will also enjoy hearing her voice on tape. If you do not have a tape recorder, she can write about the interview in her journal or dictate to you. She could also write, or dictate to you, a story about the interview. She might want to draw pictures, too.

Books Starring Older Folks

Next time you take your child to the library, look for these books. It's good for children to see older persons as important and competent.

My Great-Aunt Arizona	Gloria Houston
The Potato Man	Megan McDonald
Not the Piano, Mrs. Medley!	Evan Levine
Grandpa's Face	Eloise Greenfield
Loop the Loop	Barbara Dugan
The Wednesday Surprise	Eve Bunting
Brrr!	James Stevenson

moon



cactus

balloon

Ask your child to find the things in the sa

TV Imagination

Watching television is passive. Here is an activity that will help your child use imagination about what he watches on television.

Make a list together of some of his favorite shows. Then ask some questions: What five TV characters (people or cartoons) would you like to have as friends? Why would you choose these characters? Write the names of the characters across a sheet of paper. Put qualities or characteristics that he mentions about each character under the name.

He can then look at how the characters are different from each other. He will also be able to see what they have in common. Are the characters like his real-life friends?

He might have fun talking about how he would spend time with one of his TV friends. Where might they go? What might they do?

Clifford					
He's a dog					
He's big					
He's fun					

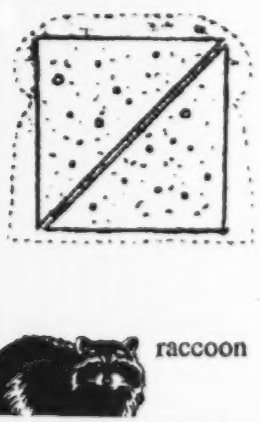
Shape Up Some Sandwiches

Make some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or any kind that won't come apart when you cut them into different shapes. Your child can do the spreading.

Cut the sandwiches into as many different shapes as you and your child can think of. If you start with the usual square, cut it diagonally to make triangles. You can get fancy with five sides (a pentagon) or eight sides (an octagon).

You might even make a parallelogram. If you get carried away and make too many sandwiches, label them with the name of the shape and freeze them. Your youngster will feel very clever going off to school with a pentagon sandwich.

You could also help him cut bread into shapes and add filling when he wants a sandwich.



raccoon

noon

rug

spoon

s that end with the same sound as *dune*.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

I'd Rather Be Older

I'd be Andrew if I could.
He's already nine.
He gets to stay up later
Than other friends of mine.

I'm six.

I'd be Nancy if I could
Nancy's almost ten.
She pitches games in Little League.
I'm playing T-ball—*again.*

I'm still six.

But I wouldn't be Phillip if I could.—
He makes people coo.
He still wears a bib under his chin.
Phillip's not even two.

I'd rather be six.

Patricia Penn

Older and Younger

One at a time, name some friends, neighbors, or family members. Ask your child, "Is this person older than you or younger than you?"

Growing Up

Name a few things your child can do now that she could not do when she was younger (talk, color, feed herself). See if she can name some other things, too. Talk about some of the exciting things she will do when she is older (learn to drive, get a job, go to high school, go to college). You could also talk about how learning to read will help her succeed.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Straight Talk with Your Child

Parents are people, too. We all have hot buttons, things that we are sensitive about. Children can often push those buttons without knowing it. When they do, parents sometimes lose their tempers and leave the kids upset, in tears, grounded—and not understanding what they did wrong.

When such a scene has happened in your house, you may remember that you felt upset afterward, too. If you think about what your child did to make you angry, you might find that it often involves your hot button. It may be noise or messiness. It might be your child's not finishing a meal.

Whatever it is, talking with your youngster about it can help. Be very open. "You must wonder why I get so upset when you don't put your things away. I know I overreact sometimes, but I really hate messy rooms. I know you don't mean to make me mad when you leave your things scattered around. I don't like to be cross with you. What do you think we could do about this problem?"

Children are also people. They like to be treated as adults. They respond well to honest expressions of feelings. Even young children can learn to solve problems if they get practice. If they don't, they will continue to use tears and temper displays whenever there is conflict.

As we all become able to "own up" to our own actions and emotions, we will blame each other less. Straight talk between parent and child helps everybody become more responsible.

PS 031034

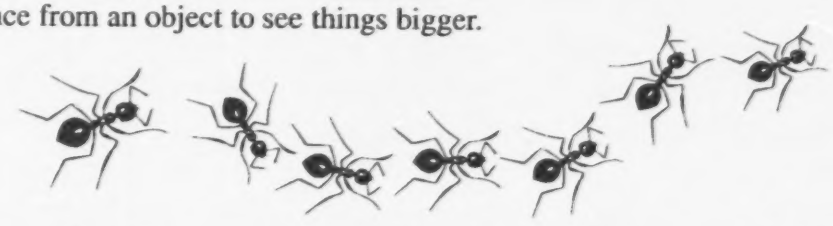
Make a Magnifier

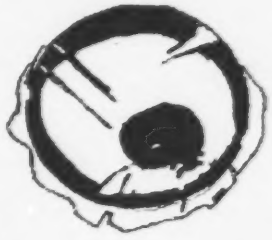
Your child will have fun making his own magnifier. You need plastic wrap and something to make a frame. A jar ring is ideal. If you don't have one, you can make a frame from a styrofoam or heavy paper cup.

Cut about a half-inch ring from around the top of the cup. Stretch plastic wrap tightly across it and slip a rubber band around to hold it. Your child can do it from here on. Give him these directions.

Put a drop of water on the plastic wrap. Try holding the magnifier at different distances from an object. You will find the best distance from an object to see things bigger. That's called magnification. (He will find that the water moves around, but stays on the plastic wrap pretty well. If it slides off, just add more.) Then encourage him to wonder what would happen if . . .

Using water to magnify is great fun. It's also well worth spending a dollar or two to buy a magnifying glass for your child. Few things are better for stimulating curiosity and encouraging interest in science.





Cook Some Welsh Rarebit

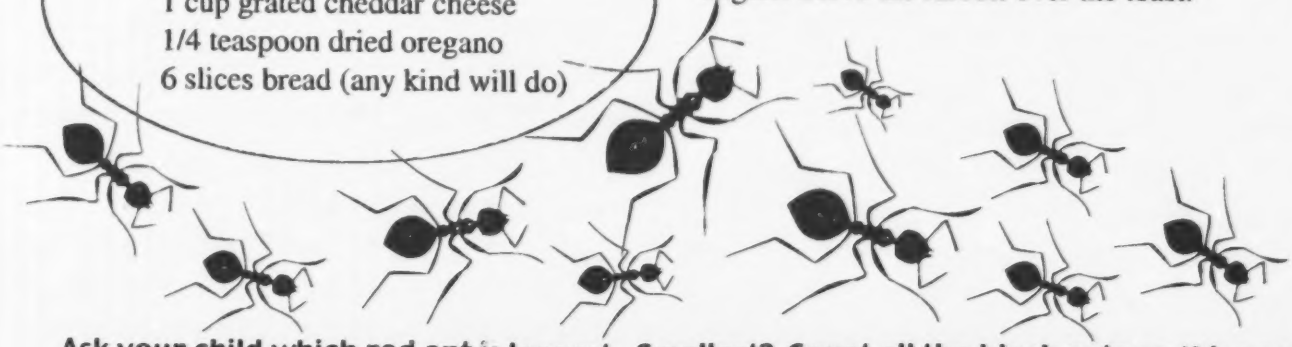
Some folks call it Welsh Rabbit. Some call it Cheese Tom Ditty. Whatever your family wants to call it, they will enjoy eating it. And your child will like making it. He can do most of the work with your supervision.

You need:

1 can (10 1/2 ounces) tomato soup
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
6 slices bread (any kind will do)

Heat the soup until it begins to bubble, stirring constantly. (Don't add water.) Add the cheese and continue stirring until it melts. Crush the oregano between thumb and forefinger and add it to the mixture. Your child will probably say something about pizza at this point, since oregano gives pizza its distinctive aroma.

Toast the bread and cut it into four triangles. Serve the rarebit over the toast.



Ask your child which red ant is largest. Smallest? Count all the black ants on this page.

A One-Foot Walk

Your child will be amazed at what she can discover on this very short walk. She will use all her senses, and learn how to observe as scientists do.

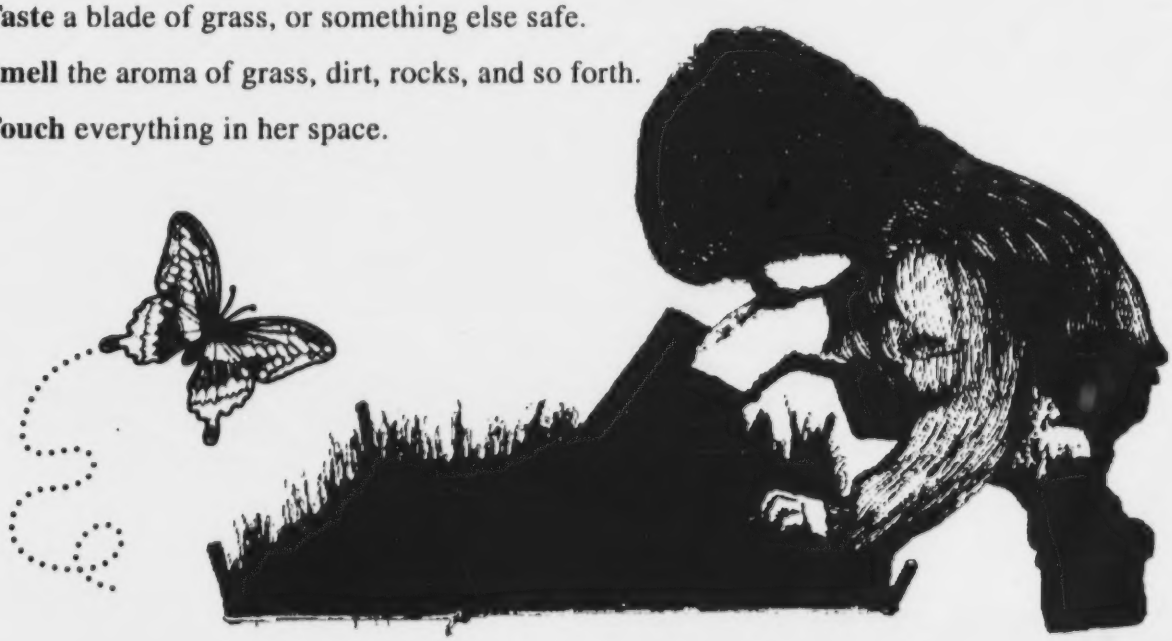
There are a number of ways to do a one-foot walk. Here is the first kind.

Help her measure a four-foot piece of string or twine. Tie the ends together. Take the string outside. Have her choose a piece of ground where she can arrange the string in a square and anchor the corners. She will take her one-foot walk within the square, using her senses instead of her feet.

You can be her recorder. Write down everything that she tells you she is observing, hearing, and experiencing. Using a magnifying glass can add excitement to the one-foot walk. To extend the activity, she may want to find answers to the questions that are bound to occur to her.

Variations: Use the string to take a circle walk. Or, use a 12-inch ruler to measure a square, and mark it off with rocks or some other material found outside. Extend the square to see whether her senses will make more discoveries in a larger space.

- **Look** for different kinds of grass or plants, bugs, rocks, and dirt.
- **Listen** for sounds that will be in her one-foot walk.
- **Taste** a blade of grass, or something else safe.
- **Smell** the aroma of grass, dirt, rocks, and so forth.
- **Touch** everything in her space.



Ask your child to tell you which ladybug has the most dots. Which has the least?

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Jellyfish of the Sea

We're not all alike,
With our jellyfish gel,
Some shaped like umbrellas,
Some shaped like a bell.

We come in all sizes,
From small as a pea
To one arctic cousin
About seven foot three.

I'm as big as a soup bowl
Colored sky blue, I think.
My sister's pale orange.
My brother is pink.

We don't like to sting folks,
But what can we do?
What would you do to people
Who stepped on you?

Patricia Penn

Comparisons

Ask your child which is bigger. A pea or a soup bowl? An umbrella or a jar of jelly? The arctic jellyfish or him? To check his answer to the last question, you will need to measure your child's height. Ask him to stand straight with his back to a wall or doorway. Use a pencil to mark his height, then use a ruler or tape measure to see how tall he is. Next, measure 7 feet and 3 inches from the floor and lightly mark the wall to show how tall the arctic jellyfish is. Compare.

Ring Around the "S" Words

Circle the word "sea" in the title of the poem. Then give your child the pencil and let her circle the rest of the words that begin with the same letter ("s"). If she has trouble, try reading the poem aloud and pointing to each word as you read it so that she can listen for the "s" sound.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Parents' Expectations Matter

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they're capable of being." —*Goethe*

Parental expectations are a powerful predictor of a child's school success, according to some research. It's important for you to expect a lot. It's even more important that you do not expect the wrong things.

If you ask children to do something that is impossible for them to do, they may feel like failures. The first time you ask your child to do something new, offer support. You might show how it's done or simply offer suggestions. Give children a real chance to succeed. Succeeding gives them a self-image as learners, and they are eager to do more.

It's also a good idea to do some things with your child that she's familiar with. It's good for her to be able to show off for you.

You as parent and first teacher are aware of your child's strengths. Be careful not to write off other areas as weaknesses. Children's abilities develop at different rates.

Some who have good verbal skills early will become equally skilled at math or other subjects later. Some are physically adept very young; others take longer to become graceful or agile.

Be sensitive to children's needs, but don't assume they can't do anything. You may have heard something like this when you were a child: "He'll never be a teacher. He's too shy." "She'll never be an accountant. Nobody in this family is any good at math." Children take such comments seriously. Be careful not to say such things about, or to, your child.

Expect your children to be successful learners, and you increase the probability that they will be.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031054

Songs at Bedtime

Did you know that singing is good for your health? It increases the amount of oxygen that you breathe. It makes you feel happy. And it is relaxing.

You probably sang lullabies to your child when she was a baby. Singing at bedtime is still a wonderful thing to do. Along with the storytelling you do or bedtime books you read, include a few songs. Your child may want to sing along.

Twinkle, Twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky . . .

Sing some old favorites: *London Bridge Is Falling Down; Farmer in the Dell; Three Blind Mice; I'm a Little Teapot.* She might enjoy doing a baby song like *Eensie Weensie Spider.* Make up a melody to a favorite book or nursery rhyme.

She would also enjoy hearing some of your favorite songs from an earlier time in your life. Sing!

A Sunshine Gram

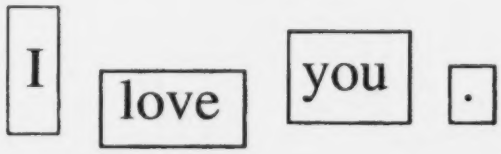
If this space is blank, write a positive note to your child and read it aloud.

Words I Know

Most children like to use scissors. Give your child some old magazines and let him do a Word Hunt. He can cut out words he knows and find pictures to go with them.

If you have old greeting cards that you hate to throw away, give him some of those. They are good material for word hunting. So are such things as empty cereal boxes, old yellow pages, and yesterday's newspaper.

You will both enjoy seeing how many words he can recognize.



A Softening Experiment

This recipe for a dish that most people like to eat—twice-baked potatoes—can also arouse curiosity in your young scientist. Your child can do almost all of the work, and it doesn't take much time—especially if you have a microwave oven.

First, give your child a potato and ask him to squeeze it to feel how firm it is. Potatoes are mostly starch, which breaks down into sugar as we digest it. This hearty veggie is loaded with vitamins plus iron and potassium. If you eat the skin you get protein as well. Your child will be interested in how the potato changes from hard to soft when it is baked.

Talk about potatoes as you prepare this dish. Explain that many years ago, Spanish explorers took the potato home with them to Europe after they explored for gold in South America. Now the potato is the most widely used vegetable in the Western Hemisphere.

Ingredients for 6 servings:

3 medium-size potatoes
1/2 teaspoon salt (or to taste)
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
3 tablespoons milk
grated cheese

Bake the potatoes as you usually do. Cut them in half lengthwise when they are cool enough to handle. Scoop out the cooked potato and set aside the skins. Mash the pulp with the salt, butter, and milk. Fill the skins and top with grated cheese. Bake them in a shallow pan at 400 degrees until the cheese melts and browns. The potatoes are also delicious browned without cheese. Don't forget—eat the skins to get the protein.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Is Your Cat Like That?

Miz Natalie Boo Radley stays in the house.
I don't think she's ever seen a field mouse.
Is your cat like that?

She has a white blaze beside of her nose,
And big orange spots on two of her toes.
Is your cat like that?

Boo has gray whiskers on top of her jaws,
And soft little pads on all of her paws.
Is your cat like that?

Boo plays in the house—she's always around.
When I'm upstairs, she meows me back down.
Is your cat like that?

She sleeps in odd places and plays with old twine,
And makes her own cat toys from objects she finds.
Is your cat like that?

I brush her soft fur; she purrs quite a lot.
Miz Natalie Boo Radley is the best friend I've got.
Is your cat like that?

Phyllis Wilson Moore

Cat Rhymes

Explain that rhymes are words that sound alike. For example *cat* rhymes with *that*. Together, see how many other words you can think of to rhyme with *cat*. The two of you could even make up your own cat poem!

Where Names Come From

Ask your child if he likes the cat's name (Miz Natalie Boo Radley). Explain that the name "Boo Radley" comes from a famous book. This would be a good time to talk with your child about where his name came from, what it means, and how you decided it was just right for him. On a piece of paper, print his name in large letters, using a capital beginning letter and making the other letters lowercase. Invite him to use his favorite crayon to "color" the letters.

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

Open-Minded Children Will Help Us Get Along

Children as young as two notice differences in skin color. Yet preschool children mix easily with playmates of all colors. By primary school, we may be shocked and saddened to hear them say racist things. How does that happen? According to one song, children "have to be carefully taught to hate." We can instead teach them not to.

Children who are five to seven years old notice all kinds of differences in people. They evaluate information, but it is hard for them to realize that differences can be good things. They may think, "I have brown skin. People who don't have brown skin are not like me, and they are bad." They can't understand yet that skin color is not what determines good and bad.

Many things influence children: television, happenings at school, books they read. But what their parents do and say has the greatest impact. If we are to raise open-minded children, we must teach them early that we do not like remarks about people based on their color or physical condition or religion. It makes a big difference when children understand that something hurtful they say can make another person feel sad.

Your child's healthy self-esteem is a big part of a willingness to accept and understand those of different races, religions, physical abilities, and backgrounds. Encourage your child to be responsible, competent, and independent. Children who feel good about themselves don't need to put down other people.

Pretending differences don't exist doesn't work. What does work is helping children to value the differences.

PS 031034

Make Some Oobleck

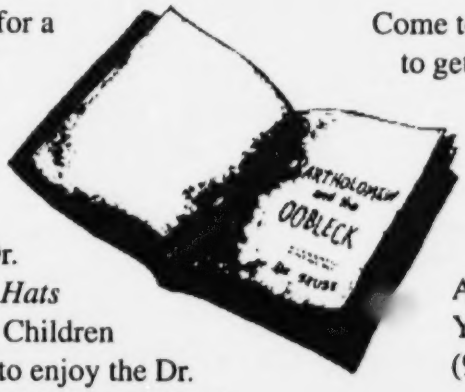
What is oobleck? In chemistry class, it would be called a non-newtonian fluid. It has properties of both solids and liquids. What you will probably call it is "messy." It is. But you and your child will love it. Don't worry; it's easy to clean up.

Have your child mix about half a cup of cornstarch with water until the mixture is fairly thick but can still be poured slowly. It's fun to add a little food coloring if you have some on hand. Now you can investigate together. You could put the mixture into different containers: a plate, or plastic dishes of varying sizes. Experiment.

Put your finger into the oobleck and pull it out quickly. Try hitting the surface of the solution rapidly. Squeeze the oobleck in your hand, then release the pressure. Try to grab some of the mixture. Try to pick it up slowly. Encourage your child to describe what happens with the different actions. The spills will clean up easily when the mixture dries.

Other things you might try: freeze oobleck; list as many ways to use it as you can think of. Can you build something with it? Can you use it as paste?

Added Oobleck Fun



"Oobleck" is named for a book by Dr. Seuss called *Bartholomew and the Oobleck.* This is a good time to read the book together, even if you have read it before. Dr. Seuss also wrote *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins.* Children never seem to get too old to enjoy the Dr. Seuss books. He wrote and illustrated 42 of them, and your public library should have several.

Come to think of it, parents never seem to get too old for Dr. Seuss books, either. His last one is called *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* His final message for the children was this:

And will you succeed?
Yes! You will indeed!
(98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)

KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!

Tell your child to "finger walk" the mountains and

Talking in Pictures

Want some quiet time with your child? Here is a way to have a conversation that is almost soundless. You will need plenty of plain paper and a writing implement for each of you. You can use pencils, crayons, or markers.

Do a simple drawing on a sheet of paper. Have your child respond with a sketch of his own. Keep "talking" until you don't have anything left to say to each other with pictures.

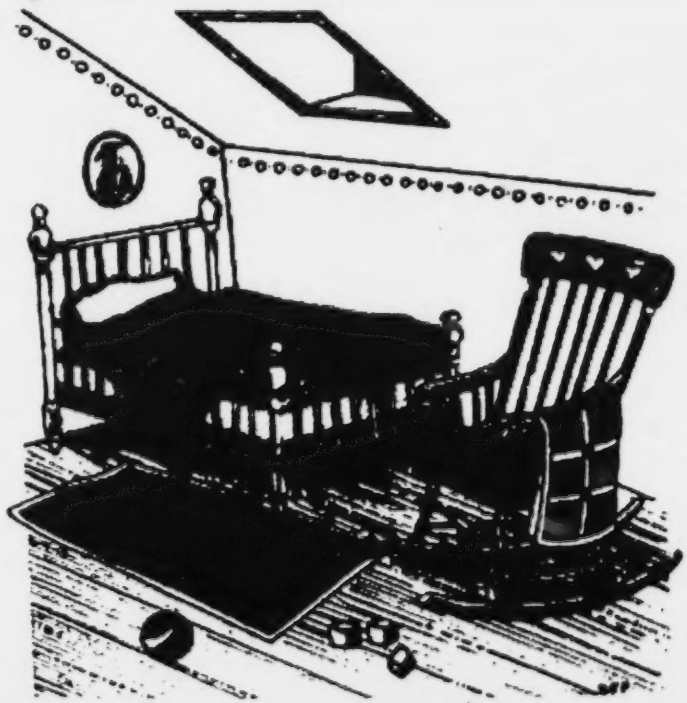
Now you can talk about your pictures if you want.

Search for Shapes

Call your child's attention to the shapes in this picture. They are all around the house. How many different shapes can she find in the picture? Around the house? Make a list.

Now, see how many of each shape she can find. Count them and record the numbers on the list. Analyze the results. How many of each kind did she find? What shape came in first? Next?

If she enjoys the activity, you can extend it by helping her make a graph of the information she collected.



name a day of the week as he reaches each peak.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

Dreaming Past Midnight

At night, my doll rides a pony
up marshmallow mountains,
shoots at trolls with golden arrows,
and saves a wagon train.

At night, my goldfish growls
when tiny pirates invade his tank.
The quiet turtle catches them,
and makes them walk the plank.

At night, my rocking horse
flies at the moon,
chasing withches
aloft on brooms.

At night, I snuggle beneath the quilt
with Tuffy, my little pup.
Together, we dream past midnight
of most amazing stuff.

— Carla Thomas McClure

Word Chat

This poem includes words and phrases that might be new to your child. See if she can tell you what these mean: troll, wagon train, pirate, walk the plank, rocking horse, aloft. If she's not sure, offer simple explanations: "Trolls are make-believe creatures that are ugly and mean" or "*aloft* means *in the air.*"

Dream Talk

Your child has probably come to you for comfort after a bad dream. But have you talked about other kinds of dreams? Some morning at breakfast, or in the car, start a conversation about dreams. Ask, "What did you dream about last night? Do you remember?" Ask questions like "What happened next?" and "Do you remember colors?" You could ask, "What is the strangest dream you have had?" You might need to reassure him that dreams are not real. Nothing in a dream can ever hurt us. Explain that most people dream every night but we don't always remember dreams. If your child seems interested, help him keep a dream journal. One way to do it is to let him dictate while you write. Let him illustrate the pages if he wants. Oh, yes—don't forget to share some of your dreams, too!

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FAMILY Connections K-1

For the family of _____

As a Parent, I Promise . . .

1. To read to my child, because children learn from good stories to be compassionate, to treat others with respect, to have courage, to have hope, to take action, and to take responsibility.

2. To promote my child's self-esteem by providing opportunities to build competence and confidence, by giving specific praise for my child's work and displaying it for others to see, and by letting my child share in family responsibilities and decisions.

3. To encourage my child's curiosity and natural interest in science and math, because all children need to learn both and all children can; and to engage with my child in activities to observe and discover, because children need to see that science and math are part of our everyday lives.

4. To pay attention to TV when my child is watching, to introduce my child to educational programs, and to watch TV together so we can talk about what we see.

5. To turn off the television more, because both child and adult programs include enormous amounts of glamorized violence, and because my child needs "quiet time" for creative play and learning.

6. To be involved in my child's education throughout the school years by showing in every way that I think education is important, by talking with my child's teachers, and by volunteering my time and talent to the school.

7. To enjoy my child as we grow and learn together.

Helping families and schools work together for the benefit of young children

PS 031034

A Letter to Someone

A recent poll found that the average family receives fewer than six personal letters a year.

Since most everyone loves to get letters, encourage your child to write to a relative or friend. Show your youngster how to date the letter. Talk about the greeting. A letter doesn't have to begin with "Dear Someone." "Hi, Someone," or some other informal beginning is fine.

If your child isn't writing yet, have him dictate the letter to you. Then let him sign his name at the end. If he is writing, don't worry about the correctness of spelling and punctuation. The important thing is to learn about letter writing as a way to communicate.

Show him how to address the envelope, and where to put the return address. Let him put a stamp on the letter and drop it in a mail box or take it to the post office. He can also write letters to friends or family nearby and deliver them by hand.

Milk Jug Scoop

You and your child can make a scoop from a half-gallon plastic milk container. You will be reusing the plastic and having fun at the same time.

You will need to cut a slit in the bottle at the bottom to make room for scissors. Your child can do the rest of the cutting with the scissors. If the cut edges are rough, use sandpaper or an emory board to smooth them.

The scoop will look something like this. It's great for digging in a sandbox or at the beach. It's also fun to catch a ball with it. You can use a homemade foil ball, a tennis ball, or a ping pong ball, and make up a game.

Let your child make up a story about what is happening in this picture.

Figure with This

You can have fun with your child by telling him these three fascinating facts and posing some questions to work on together.

1. A giraffe's tongue is more than 12 inches long. How long is your tongue? Is the giraffe's tongue longer or shorter than yours? Why do you think the giraffe has such a long tongue?
2. Most people breathe about 20 times a minute. (That's about 10 million times a year!) What ways can you think of to find out how many times you breathe in a minute? in an hour? in a day?
3. People have an inch measure with them wherever they go. The thumb from its tip to the first bend is usually about one inch. Can you find out whether that is true of the people you know? How?

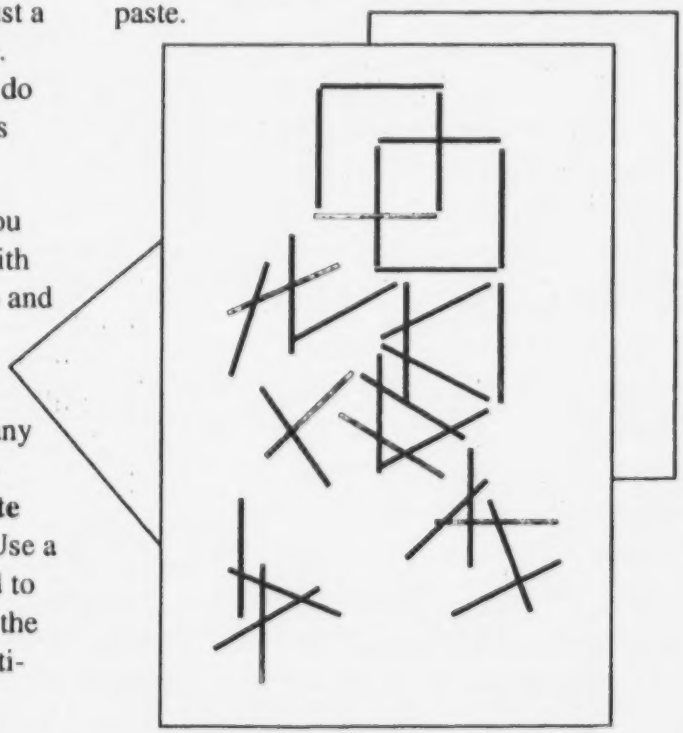
Toothpick Time

With a box of toothpicks you and your child can have many fun-filled learning activities. Multicolored toothpicks cost just a little bit more and are a lot more versatile. Here are just a few examples of things to do with toothpicks. You will think of more as you spend toothpick time together.

Sort into colors. **Count** as high as you can go. **Arrange** in groups of ten. Play with changing numbers in groups by adding to and taking away. Seeing how numbers work makes the process clear to kids.

Design patterns and shapes. How many shapes can you make with just five toothpicks? How many more with 10? **Estimate** how many toothpicks wide the table is. (Use a small table for this.) Then put enough end to end to reach from one side of the table to the other. Count them to see how close the estimate came.

Create art by making designs on white or colored paper. Secure the arrangement with paste.



Let your child look for things in your house that are as long as this pencil.

Learning to Read with Read-Alouds

The Bubblegum Store

The Bubblegum Store is a wonderful spot.
I sure like to go there. I like it a lot!
The walls are bright yellow, the ceiling is blue,
with gum piled so high, there's plenty to chew!

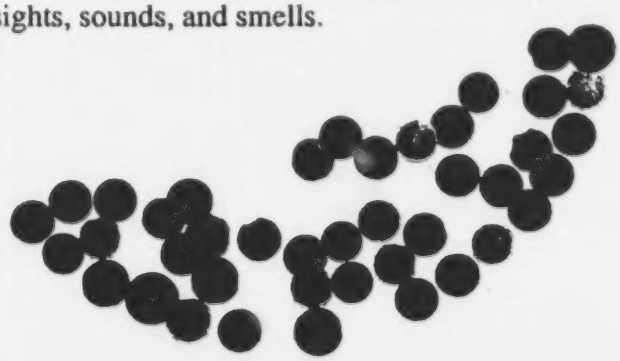
A golden bell rings when you open the door.
The owner is asking, "Are you back for more?"
Root beer and orange, apple and lime—
I try a new flavor every time.

I blow big bubbles. I blow till they pop!
They stick to my face, but I don't want to stop.
I never get tired of the Bubblegum Store
I could live there forever, and sleep on the floor.

Richard Southall

Tasting Flavors

Ask your child, "What are your favorite flavors? If you could make a new flavor of bubblegum, what would it be? What color?" You could also ask her to tell you her favorite sights, sounds, and smells.



Listening to B's

Read the poem a second time. This time, ask your child to clap his hands every time he hears the "b" sound. Then, ask him to tell you some words that rhyme with *bell* (fell, shell, tell).

b

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FAMILY Connections K-1

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